Benedict's Rule

The Rise of Ethnicity and the Fall of Rome

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To Ruth

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INTRODUCTION

The year 2002 was one of those transitional moments. The attack on the World Trade Center had taken place one year before. The attack on Iraq and the launching of America as a full-blown empire which would use 9/11 as its justification would take place one year later. During the interlude between those two events, I was asked to give a lecture on the Rule of St. Benedict, and that request gave me the opportunity to meditate not only on the connections between the Roman and American Empires, but on their respective failures as well. In both instances, the intolerable psychic vacuum which Empire creates at home was filled by ethnicity and religion. What was painfully apparent in late antiquity when the Germanic barbarian hoards crossed the Rhine and Danube Rivers to set up the Gothic Kingdom that was the sequel to the Roman Empire is only apparent to those with eyes to see in the American Empire as Mexicans pour across the Rio Grande. But the similarities remain, and the solutions to the psychic anomie that Empire inevitably leaves in its wake are the same today as they were in 410.

Living at a time of unprecedented upheaval and social chaos, Benedict of Nursia could not save the Roman Empire from collapse, but he did something even more remarkable; he created Europe to take its place. It didn't happen overnight; it took, in fact, centuries to achieve, but over the course of the time between when Rome fell and the cities of Europe took its place, Benedict took the best that classical culture had to offer, combined it with Christianity, and came up with a very specific way to live in a world where chaos was the rule.

Through the initiative of Gregory the Great and subsequent popes, Benedict's Rule became, in Dawson's words, "the Roman standard of the monastic life and finally the universal type of Western monasticism." Once it fired the imagination of the Anglo-Saxon monks in general and St. Boniface in particular, it brought order and classical coherence to the chaotic ethnic existence of the Germanic tribes on both sides of the Rhine, as well as the formation of new centers of culture in Ireland, Northumbria, and ultimately the Carolingian Empire. This development prompted Newman to call the six hundred years following the collapse of the Roman Empire, "the Benedictine centuries."

For it was the Anglo-Saxon monks and, above all St. Boniface, who first realized that union of Teutonic initiative and Latin order which is the source of the whole mediaeval development of culture. "The monastery," according to Newman, "was the most typical cultural institution throughout the whole period that extends from the decline of classical civilization to the rise of the European universities in the twelfth century — upwards of seven hundred years." Benedict is probably history's greatest expert and exemplar in the art of good living in community. St. Benedict's approach to it has been amply proved a realistic and effective one for mankind in general but especially for Europeans; and while he was primarily concerned with community living on a very small scale — with a family rather than a continent — his practical relevance (in this matter) is not confined to the cloister. We cannot all be monks," said one writer on the Rule's value for layman, "but it is to the monks that we must go, if we would learn once again the lost art of living in Christian community."

The name of that art of living was the Rule of St. Benedict, and it proposed in very specific terms, down to the amount of beer a monk was allowed to drink, how to live in a world where the empire had failed. In doing this, it turned the pillaging barbarians who were our ancestors into men who could grow grapes and make wine and create settled communities where they could live and where civilization could flourish in a way that the world had never seen before.

The Europe which Benedict created is now facing another kind of threat. Europe has lost contact with its roots. The Enlightenment, like a vast Chinese Wall, separates Europe's contemporary inhabitants from the man who made their culture possible. Cut off from their roots and disillusioned by one failed utopian experiment after another, European Man has contracted a spiritual disease whose clearest manifestation is his inability to reproduce. If this sickness is not cured within the course of the next generation, Europe will almost certainly reach the demographic tipping point, at which time it will become a Muslim continent.

The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of America. Cities like New York are fast on their way to losing their European character. And they are losing it for much the same reason. The Europeans are not having children.

Faced with a different kind of crisis, Benedict did not set out to restore the empire that had failed. Nor should we. He instead focused his efforts on the small community, and so should we. By focusing their attention on exclusively military matters, the Roman emperors created a cultural vacuum which was filled by Christianity and the mystery religions from the east. Being a *civis romanus* increasingly meant being little more than a source of funds for the military as it pursued its ends in obscure frontier settlements far to the north. In the cultural vacuum which the warfare state created, Christianity began to appeal to those who felt isolated and deserted by a leviathan state focused on imperial concerns far from home. Being a Christian filled those needs in terms of both doctrine and community. In 250 AD, it meant more to be a Christian, both in terms of doctrine and community, than it meant to be a *civis romanus*, and as a result Christianity began to take over the psychic space formerly occupied by secular allegiance.

Immigration accelerated the process. Those who had been cut off from their native tribes and now found themselves adrift in a culture that could no longer propose convincing forms for assimilation outside of the small, still pagan enclaves of high culture, could now be integrated without difficulty into the small community which was the "new Israel" which also had succeeded in terms of morals where the old empire had failed. Galen, according to Brown, "noticed that the Christians were apparently enabled by their brutally simple parables and commands to live according to the highest maxims of ancient ethics." Morals, then as always, enabled community to flourish by removing the disruption of anti-social behavior.

The small Christian community was centered on the Eucharist, but in addition to moral living it also demanded almsgiving and those alms, once given, were returned to the less fortunate with the Church and bishop administering the funds, thus strengthening the bonds of community even further. Doctrine and praxis reinforced each other, and the fruit was community: "The appeal of Christianity still lay in its radical sense of community: it absorbed people because the individual could drop from a wide impersonal world into a miniature community, whose demands and relations were explicit."

The resurrection of the term "citizen" by the Jacobins during the French Revolution was an explicit attempt to return to pre-Christian models and reverse the process away from abstract secular citizenship into a religious community that was just beginning with the rise of Christianity in Rome. Christianity had absorbed the idea of *civis romanus* and combined it with the Jewish notion of "the true Israel" and had come up with an idea of community that provided what the empire with its military preoccupations lacked, a sense of mutually enforcing meaning and belonging that did not so much act in opposition to the empire as it functioned under its radar screen. Because of its coherent doctrine and concern for community, the Church had positioned itself by the end of the 4th century to absorb a group of people who had become alienated from the concerns of the imperial war machine.

Benedict's vision of the small community is now more relevant than ever. At a time of imperial over-extension and the threat of imminent collapse, at a time when "citizen" is a euphemism for taxpayer or cannon fodder or both, everyone is in need of a supportive community. At a time of demographic collapse, young people need to know that these small communities will support them in a specific way so that they can marry and raise families. When they fail to receive that assurance from the Church, the young simply fail to marry and have children, creating a sense of doom based on the feeling that there is no future. And they are right. Without children there is no future. Their fears have created a self-fulfilling prophecy. Cut off from Europe's Benedictine past, the Europeans and their American cousins suddenly find themselves cut off from the future as well by their fear-driven refusal to have children.

The way out of this impasse is the small community, and it is my contention that Benedict is still relevant as an architect of the small community. The generation of Europeans and Americans now in their twenties is burdened by debt (largely as a result of education), unable to find jobs (many of which have been exported to third world countries) which will enable them to pay off that debt, and in many places (I'm thinking of New York and California) unable to find affordable housing. As a result, family life seems like an impossible dream. As a result, they then sink into the illusions of sexual freedom which their predatory cultures promote as ways of keeping them under control.

As I have demonstrated in my book *The Slaughter of Cities*, Catholic communities across America were ravaged during the '50s and '60s by a form of ethnic cleansing known as urban renewal. As a result, many of the parish buildings which were created to serve those ethnic communities now stand empty. Some, as in the case of one parish in Detroit, are being sold to Muslims. The archdiocese of New York is one of the biggest property owners in New York City. Many of the buildings it owns now stand empty in a city in which the overwhelming majority of young couples can't afford to rent, much less buy, a house. Those empty buildings are now begging to be put to productive use. What better productive use is there than to give young couples a place to start their families?

What I'm proposing is very simple. Let one or two or three Benedictine monks take over one or two or three abandoned parish buildings in cities like Philadelphia, Detroit, New York, or Boston and turn them into monasteries which could provide affordable housing for young Catholic couples who want to live according to the 21st century version of the rule of St. Benedict. In a well-known passage on the mission of St. Benedict, Newman writes:

> St. Benedict found the world, physical and social, in ruins, and his mission was to restore it in the way not of science, but of nature, not as if setting about to do it, not professing to do it by any set time, or by any rare specific, or by any serious strokes, but so quietly, patiently, gradually, that often till the work was done, it was not known to be doing. It was a restoration rather than a visitation, correction or conversion. The new work which he helped to create was a growth rather than a structure. Silent men were observed about the country, or discovered in the forest, digging, clearing and building; and other silent men, not seen, were sitting in the cold cloister, tiring their eyes and keeping their attention on the stretch, while they painfully copied and recopied the manuscripts which they had saved. There was on one who contended or cried out, or drew attention to what was going on, but by degrees the woody swamp became a hermitage, a religious house, a farm, an abbey, a village, a seminary, a school of learning and a city.

The same type of spirit can restore the Catholic neighborhoods that were ravaged by the social engineering of the '50s and 60s. In the time since I wrote this extended essay, I have seen the return of abandoned neighborhoods in South Bend, Indiana. The movement away from suburban isolation is inexorable for creatures whose being is by nature social. This essay attempts to make fate of all empires and the alternatives to that fate more explicit.

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THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The Roman Empire is once again a topic of intense interest. In some circles, it has become fashionable to call for a return of imperialism and colonialism of the sort exercised by Britain and Rome. According to her survey of those voices in the *New York Times,* Emily Eakin claims that "America is no mere superpower or hegemon but a full-blown empire in the Roman and British sense." She then turns to what she calls "some of the most notable U.S. commentators and scholars," which in official foreign policy parlance means neoconservatives, people like Charles Krauthammer, identified as a "conservative columnist," who feels that "People are now coming out of the closet on the word 'empire.' The fact is no country has been as dominant culturally, economically, technologically and militarily in the history of the world since the Roman Empire." Max Boot of the *Wall Street Journal,* who authored a sympathetic article on empire in the equally neocon *Weekly Standard,* opined that "we are an attractive empire, the one everyone wants to join." If, the thoughtful reader might wonder at this point, "we" are so attractive, why do we need the most powerful military force the world has ever seen, especially since everyone "wants to join" anyway?

According to Robert Kaplan, author of *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos,* "Rome's victory in the Second Punic War, like America's in World War II, made it a universal power." As a result, the Pax Americana offers "the best hope for peace and stability" in a troubled world. Forgetting for a moment that American foreign policy is one of the main things stirring up trouble in the world, the neo-imperialists talk about the unprecedented scale of military power, as if that were going to insure that the American empire isdestined to succeed where the Roman Empire failed. "Nothing," according to Yale Professor Paul Kennedy,

> has ever existed like this disparity of power. The Pax Britannica was run on the cheap, Britain's army was much smaller than European armies and even the Royal Navy was equal only to the next two navies — right now all the other navies in the world combined could not dent American maritime supremacy. Napoleon's France and Philip II's Spain had powerful foes and were part of a multipolar system. Charlemagne's empire was merely western European in its stretch. The Roman Empire stretched further afield, but there was another great empire in Persia and a larger one in China. There is no comparison.

What all of these accounts of empire — in Kaplan's words, "the most benign form of order" — omit is the fact that the fabled Roman Empire fell, not in spite of its military might, but in many ways because of it. Preoccupation with military concerns had hollowed out the conception of citizen to the point where it had become a meaningless formality, one which the subjects of the Roman Empire eagerly exchanged for more meaningful designations of a religious or ethnic sort. The confrontation between St. Benedict, the father of western monasticism, and Totila, King of the Goths, which St. Gregory describes in his life of St. Benedict, gives some indication of the decline of empire which military might was unable to forestall. By the early sixth century, Rome still had armies; or perhaps it might be more accurate to say that for some time, armies had Rome. In a situation of perpetual war, men who were still technically Romans tramped up and down the Italian peninsula looking for other options. The confrontation between Totila and Benedict proposed two which would have consequences for the next millennium, long after Rome's empire had become an irrelevant memory.

Totila, King of the Goths, had heard rumors about the holy man living on top of the mountain. Benedict of Nursia, founder of the monastery of Monte Cassino, it was said, could read men's souls. He could predict the future, and, in one instance, he had unfastened the heavy cord which bound the hands of an innocent man by "a mere glance." At least that's what his biographer, Pope Gregory the Great, had said. "As Benedict's influence spread over the surrounding countryside because of his signs and wonders," Gregory continued, "a great number of men gathered around him to devote themselves to God's service. Christ blessed his work, and before long he had established twelve monasteriesthere, with an abbot and twelve monks in each of them."

Totila had things other than God's service on his mind at the time of his meeting. In 543, the year he met with St. Benedict, he was on his way to Naples to reestablish the Kingdom of the Goths, a political entity of relatively new vintage which was unraveling under the pressure of events. With the death of Theodoric in 526, the Gothic kingdom — established in 418, when the Roman Empire could no longer control Gothic influence and had decided to make as a result a virtue out of necessity by recognizing their hegemony over certain regions of the empire — had fallen on hard times. Theodoric, known in the *Niebelungenlied* as Dietrich of Berne, had died without a son, still trying to confer the kingdom on his grandson. Justin and his successor Justinian I had bided their time for nine years, but, sensing that the moment to reunite the lapsed Western empire with the East under one ruler in Constantinople was ripe, Justinian sent his general Belisarius to Italy to regain it for the empire and, as a result, plunged the Italian peninsula into what would amount to almost 20 years of war. The chaos which the Gothic barbarians had inflicted on the Western empire under Alaric's rule over 100 years before was now being continued by an emperor who wanted his western territories back.

Totila, like most of his sort, wanted to know the future, since the future held the fate of the Gothic kingdom in its hand and was holding its hand, at the moment, close to its chest. As if to test Benedict's powers of discernment, Totila sent Riggo, one of his servants, to him mounted on a horse and dressed as a king along with all of Totila's attendants. Benedict was evidently not impressed. Not even rising to his feet whenRiggo entered the monastery grounds, Benedict called out, "Son, lay aside the robes you are wearing. Lay them aside. They do not belong to you."

Having thus impressed Totila with his powers of discernment, Benedict then took the opportunity to berate the king of the Goths for his criminal behavior, presumably for the pillaging that was the natural accompaniment of warfare in that day. Constant warfare had become a way of life in the last days of empire, and it would ravage the Italian peninsula until well after Totila's death. If Totila were wondering whether Benedict could advise him on the future, he got more than he bargained for. In addition to condemning him for his crimes — "'You are the cause of many evils,' he said. 'You have caused many in the past. Put an end now to your wickedness.'" — Benedict told him that he would "enter Rome and cross the sea" and then die in the tenth year after their meeting. Totila died in 552. There is some evidence that he took the holy man's admonition to heart because Gregory the Great says that after Benedict "rebuked the king for his crimes and briefly foretold everything that was going to happen to him," Totila "was less cruel from that time on."

The confrontation between Totila and Benedict is one of the few demonstrably historical incidents in Gregory the Great's biography of

St. Benedict, a book that was intended to edify its readers with examples of the wonders which faith could work in a failing world. But for all that, the historical confrontation is full of symbolism as well. The confrontation between Totila and Benedict presented in stark relief the options which were then available to the inhabitants of what used to be known asthe Roman Empire. Belisarius may have led Justinian to believe that it was still possible to restore the empire to its old glory, but Gregory seems to have thought otherwise. By the time he wrote his life of Benedict, the empire was gone, and the perceptive reader of his story saw that the only options left were symbolized by Totila, the barbarian chief on the one hand, and Benedict, the man of the Church, on the other. Between these two men, and their literal and spiritual descendants, the fate of Europe would be decided over the next 1,000 years.

This formulation in fact misstates the case because it implies that Europe was already in existence, something which was manifestly not the case if by Europe we mean a piece of geography with a unified culture based on Christianity. After centuries of struggle, the descendants of Totila and Benedict determined what Europe was and what it was not, by among other things, determining that Islam belonged beyond the pale, in Asia Minor and Africa, and not in Spain and the Balkans or Austria.

The cultural options facing Romans after the fall of the empire were quite clear. They were ethnicity and religion, and it was out of the interplay of these elements that the identity of Europe would be forged over the next millennium. That meant that for a long time an ethnic war society would coexist side by side with a religious society based on peace, and that out of those two cultures — out of the union of that sperm and egg, so to speak — Europe was conceived. In Gregory's account, those two options are represented by Totila and Benedict. "The rise of the new Western European culture," according to Christopher Dawson, "is dominated by this sharp dualism between two cultures, two social traditions and two spiritual worlds — the war society of the barbarian kingdom with its cult of heroism and aggression and the peace society of the Christian Church with its ideals of asceticism and renunciation and its high theological culture."

Conspicuous by its absence from both the Rule of Benedict and Gregory's account of his life were concerns about the fate of the Roman Empire, that system of abstract laws and administrative functions which had assigned order and meaning to life in the Mediterranean basin for almost a millennium.

Totila knew by history and experience that the things he and his people wanted were no longer Rome's to give. From his point of view, the patrimony of the Roman empire lay in the large amounts of loot which were simply lying around for the taking, as it had been since the time of Alaric, the first man who dared to call himself *Rex Gothorum* within the empire's borders, had understood when he sacked Rome in 410, over a century before Benedict foretold Totila's fate.

The decline of the empire meant the rise of ethnicity, loyalty not to abstract principles of administration and social order, but loyalty instead to a man, a leader, and his people, his tribe. Had there been no Benedict to confront the Goths, Europe might haveevolved along lines similar to Africa before the arrival of Christianity, which is to say a continent of warring tribes, Islamic at one end, Christian at the other and pagan/animist in out-of-the-way places in between. Gregory hints that Benedict changed Totila by making him less cruel, but the evidence that Christianity was going to change war-like ethnic characteristics was slight to nonexistent at the time. It took the eyes of faith to see it because, according to ordinary sight, only the darkness of barbarian marauding and pillage was visible at the time.

At the time Gregory wrote his life of Benedict, it looked as if the war society were going to be the dominant strain filling the vacuum which the collapse of the Roman Empire had left behind. The only thing that remained constant during this period was war and its sequelae — famine, disease, and the continuing decline of what had once been known as civilization. Chaos still reigned supreme at the end of the sixth century, 50 years after Benedict's death, when Gregory wrote of the sufferings of his day. Prisoners, Gregory wrote, were "tied by the neck like dogs and led away to slavery." Peasants were mutilated by one marauding band after another outside the city walls. Those who were fortunate to escape from these bands to a fortified city were faced with the equally grim prospect of slow starvation after those bands raised a siege against the town. Pope Gregory felt that the end of the world was near, and he was right. The world aseveryone had known it for almost a millennium had ended at some point during the century in which he had been born. Since no one knew if a new world were going to take its place, it seemed quite simply like the end of everything, something which led those who were Christians to contemplate the world to come in anespecially earnest manner. "What is there," Gregory wondered,

> to please us in this world. Everywhere we see sorrow and lamentation. The cities and towns are destroyed, the fields are laid waste, and the land returns to solitude. No peasant is left to till the fields; there are few inhabitants left in the cities and yet even these scanty remnants of humanity are still subject to ceaseless sufferings. … Some are led away captive, others are mutilated and still more slain before our eyes. What is there then to please us in this world? If we still love such a world as this, it is plain that we love not pleasure but misery.

Pope Gregory was not alone in feeling that the end of the world had arrived. The same sense of doom pervaded the writings of Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome 200 years before. Jerome had been born in 340, and by the end of his life, he felt that he was witnessing the events foretold in the Apocalypse, with Goths playing the role of Gog and Magog. "All things are in turmoil," he wrote, because "the barbarians still revel and riot in our land." During the summer of 378, when Jerome was 38 years old, the Roman legions under Valens had received their worst defeat since the defeat of Decius at the Dobrudja marshes at the mouth of the Danube when they were defeated by the Goths at the battle of Adrianople. The defeat of the legions at the hands of barbarians confirmed Jerome, Ambrose and Orosius in their worst fears. Their writings were suffused with a sense of despair, despair at least in the power of the empire to overcome chaos.

During the severe winter of 405-06, Jerome noted glumly that the Vandals had captured Mainz and Worms after literally walking across the frozen Rhine. The fall of two more Roman cities allowed Jerome to fulminate against the Roman policy of the past 30 years — ever since the defeat of the legions at Adrianople — of appeasing the barbarians. Appeasement had not stopped the barbarian incursions, and now the situation was so far gone that even a military victory would have been meaningless. There were simply too many barbarians and too little infrastructure left, both physical and cultural, to integrate them, into the empire as Romans. The Roman system of administration had been overwhelmed in the end by a sheer numbers in combination with a number of bad decisions.

Jerome, translator of the Bible and one of the great geniuses of the early Church, was, like most of his fellow Christians, convinced

that the end of this world meant the advent of the next, when Christ returned in glory, and so his gloom was suffused with hope, but unlike later figures like Gregory and Benedict, Jerome is still very much the Roman partisan, second-guessing the political leaders of his day, denouncing Stilicho, to give just one example, as a half-barbarian traitor who used Roman money to arm its enemiesagainst it. All of Roman policy since thetime of the Battle of Adrianople had been nothing but a series of bad decisions compounding an already grave situation. For Jerome, the Roman, the Goths were nothing more than a curse from God visited on them in punishment for the sins of the Empire and the lukewarmness of so many Christians. Perhaps because the world seemed about to end, or perhaps because of his *Romanitas,* or the fact that he could conceive of no other world, Jerome proposes nothing radically new, no new social structures to replace the forms of empire that were failing. The Gothic invasions suggest simple options in response — either restoration or extinction. If restoration, the Christians will help rebuild Rome on a more solid foundation; if extinction the Christians will live lives that will allow them to meet their maker without shame. There is no third way for Jerome.

In this he is unlike Benedict, whose thinking is post-imperial. There is no political second-guessing in Benedict's writing, nor does Gregory give any hint of that sort of thinking in his account of Benedict's life. Benedict does not accuse the Goths of reveling and rioting "in our land," as Jerome does. By the time Benedict confronted Totila, there was no clear cut ethnic dichotomy of the us-them sort which Jerome used to distinguish Romans from barbarians. This was so, first of all, because Italy by then had been ruled by Goths since the last years of the fifth century and, secondly, because there were probably Goths in Benedict's monastery when he confronted Totila. It is as if some momentous divide has been crossed in the time between Jerome and Benedict. Unlike Jerome, Benedict wastes no time fulminating against half- (or completely) barbarian generals and kings. It's as if he has given up on the restoration of empire. It was gone, never to return. What was needed now was something new to take its place.

What happened in the interim between Jerome and Benedict is now known as ethnogenesis. The decline of empire meant the rise of ethnicity. In 9 A.D. a perfidious German by the name of Hermann lured the Roman legion under Varrus into a narrow ravine somewhere beyond the upper reaches of the Lippe River, in what is now the German state of Nordrhein-Westfalen. Unable to deploy its military strength because of the terrain, the Roman legion was slaughtered in what came to be known as the battle of Teutoburgerwald. As a result, Rome eventually fell back behind Europe's two major rivers, west of the Rhine and south of the Danube, using them as a natural boundary and line of defense.

About 100 years later, the Roman legions added the Dacian kingdom, north of the Danube, to the Empire, but that territorial addition proved untenable because at around the same time, the Wielbark culture, of which the Goths were part, began expanding from the Baltic to the South until they finally made contact with the northernmost border of the Roman Empire. After what Heather calls a "fairly straight forward cost-benefit analysis," the Romans abandoned their plans to expand the empire to the Elbe. Theyalso abandoned their settlements north of the Danube at around the same time since they were becoming increasingly difficult to subdue, especially in light of the meager economic return that they provided. By the third century, the northern border of the Roman Empire had reverted to the Rhein-Danube frontier.

By the year 200, imperial culture was firmly in place. That meant that a man who had adopted Roman culture could pass from one island of culture to another all the way from Spain to Persia or from Holland to Egypt and find people like himself who spoke a uniform common language, who shared cultural experience based on a literature and art and philosophy that were "shared by all educated men." But in order to get from one island of imperial culture to another, that same man had to pass over seas of ethnic, "barbarian" culture where people spoke languages like Celtic in France and Syriac in the mid-East, and Germanic tongues increasingly along the northern borders of the empire. The educated Romans, according to Peter Brown,

> were notoriously tolerant of race and of local religions. But the price they demanded for inclusion in their own world was conformity — the adoption of its style of life, of its traditions, of its education, and so of its two classical languages, Latin in the West and Greek in the East. Those who were in no position to participate were dismissed: they were frankly despised as "country-bumpkins" and "barbarians." Those who could have participated and did not — most notably the Jews — were treated with varying degrees of hatred and contempt, only occasionally tempered by respectful curiosity for the representatives of an ancient Near Easter civilization. Those who had once participated and had ostentatiously "dropped out" — namely the Christians — were liable to summary execution.

Imperial culture, in other words, was the water which made travel between those islands of high classical culture possible. As that sea began to recede, the isolation of those Roman enclaves increased. In addition, a once submerged more ancient world of ethnic loyalty and culture began to emerge aswell.

The crisis which those ethnic, more ancient cultures provoked arrived in the middle of the third century. The protection which natural boundaries like the Rhine and the Danube provided was to prove deceptive. One of the greatest achievements of the Roman Empire was the *Pax Romana,* a Mediterranean world at peace. That world ended in mid-third century with the rise of the Persian Empire in the East in 224, the formation of the Gothic confederacy in the Danube basin after 248, and the increasing threat of Germanic tribal incursion along the Rhine after 260. During the third quarter of the third century, every frontier collapsed under barbarian assault. In the year 251, the Roman emperor Decius died in battle fighting the Goths in the marshes of the Dobrudja at the mouth of the Danube River.

In order to save the empire, the last remnants of civilian control over the military were abolished. In 260, the senate was excluded from military commands. Their place was taken by professional soldiers who recast the Roman army, breaking up the unwieldy legions into smaller, more flexible units which were more effective in dealing with barbarian raiders. The same military reformers doubled the size of the army and, in doing so, more than doubled its cost. The immediate military crisis was averted, however, by exchanging it for the long-term problem of how to pay for a military force of over 600,000 men, the largest single army the world had ever seen. No one embodied the reforms better than Diocletian, the man from what is now Croatia, who built his palace in Split, and visited Rome once in his lifetime. Toward the end of his reign in 300, the civilian population was complaining that there were now more tax collectors than taxpayers in the empire. The long-term problem of an expensive military state, which was the solution to the short-term problem of barbarian invasion, would reach its conclusion in the middle of the fifth century when the Roman state went bankrupt and Odovacar, the Goth chieftain the Romans were no longer able to pay off, dismissed Romulus Augustus, the last emperor in the West, and placed the crown on his own head.

Diocletian tried to revive the old virtues, largely by persecuting Christians, but by the end of his reign at the turn of the 4th century, "the old foci of loyalty had long been found to be either too abstract or too distant." The magnate of late antiquity spent lavishly on shows and processions, but he spent his money to promote his own personality and social standing and not for communal religious festivals honoring the traditional gods. The new celebrations emphasized personality over community and so sent those who attended them off with a vaguely dissatisfied feeling and determined to find a community to replace citizenship that had become increasingly hollow and meaningless. More often than not, those dissatisfied men found meaning for their lives in the "drastic experiment in social living" that small Christian communities were creating across the length and breadth of the empire.

When crisis came, the Roman plebs needed more than the old gods could provide. They needed actual communities based on beliefs that went deeper than fables based on obviously anthropomorphic gods, hence the rise of Christianity and, along with it, the rise of other religious-based communities, like the Gnostics and the devotees of Hermes Trismegisthus. Secular culture had simply gotten too big and too abstract to move the minds and hearts of the people who lived in the cities, which were increasingly lonely and impersonal places. Christianity filled the cultural spaces which the empire could no longer fill, at first among the humble and dispossessed, but by 200 and after by the cities' lower middle classes. The mobility which the empire enabled only accelerated this process. The more opportunity the average Roman had for travel, the more rootless he became, and the more rootless, the more he needed both a set of beliefs that transcended his local community and a community and a network of communities that embodied those beliefs. Christianity provided both the beliefs and the community that implemented them. Now the average citizen could avail himself of an even more extensive network of cultural outposts than that available to the aristocrat. The Christian, according to Brown,

> could cut some of the more painful Gordian knots of social living. He could, for instance, become a radical cosmopolitan. His literature, his beliefs, his art and his jargon were extraordinarily uniform, whether he lived in Rome, Lyons, Carthage, or Smyrna. The Christians were immigrants at heart — ideological deracines, separated from their environment by a belief which they knew they shared with little groups all over the empire. At a time when so many local barriers were being painfully and obscurely eroded, the Christians had already taken the step of calling themselves a "non-nation."

By focusing their attention on exclusively military matters, the Roman emperors created a cultural vacuum which was filled by Christianity and the mystery religions from the east. Being a *civis romanus* increasingly meant being little more than a source of funds for the military as it pursued its ends in obscure frontier settlements far to the north. In the cultural vacuum which the warfare state created, Christianity began to appeal to those who felt isolated and deserted by a leviathan state focused on imperial concerns far from home. Being a Christian filled those needs in terms of both doctrine and community. In 250 it meant more to be a Christian, both in terms of doctrine and community, than it meant to be a *civis romanus,* and, as a result, Christianity began to take over the psychic space formerly occupied by secular allegiance.

Immigration accelerated the process. Those who had been cut off from their native tribes and now found themselves adrift in a culture that could no longer propose convincing forms for assimilation outside of the small, still pagan enclaves of high culture, could now be integrated without difficulty into the small community which was the "new Israel," which also had succeeded in terms of morals where the old empire had failed. Galen, according to Brown, "noticed that the Christians were apparently enabled by their brutally simple parables and commands to live according to the highest maxims of ancient ethics." Morals, then as always, enabled community to flourish by removing the disruption of antisocial behavior.

ALMSGIVING AND COMMUNITY

The small Christian community was centered on the Eucharist, but in addition to moral living it also demanded almsgiving, and those alms, once given, were returned to the less fortunate, with the church and bishop administering the funds, thus strengthening the bonds of community even further. Doctrine and praxis reinforced each other, and the fruit was community: "The appeal of Christianity still lay in its radical sense of community: it absorbed people because the individual could drop from a wide impersonal world into a miniature community, whose demands and relations were explicit."

The resurrection of the term "citizen," by the Jacobins during the French Revolution, was an explicit attempt to return to pre-Christian models and reverse the process away from abstract secular citizenship into a religious community that was just beginning with the rise of Christianity in Rome. Christianity had absorbed the idea of *civis romanus* and combined it with the Jewish notion of "the true Israel" and had come up with an idea of community that provided what the empire with its military preoccupations lacked, a sense of mutually enforcing meaning and belonging that did not so much act in opposition to the empire as it functioned under its radar screen. Because of its coherent doctrine and concern for community, the Church had positioned itself by the end of the 4th century to absorb a society that had become alienated from the concerns of the imperial war machine.

Ethnicity, on the other hand, was very much on the empire's radar screen. Both ethnicity and Christianity were responses to the fact that being a *civis romanus* no longer meant what it had before. Like two islands that, after the water level receded, showed themselves as twin peaks in the same mountain range, religion and ethnicity began to dominate the culture space with imperial culture left vacant because of its preoccupation with war. Ethnogenesis began in earnest in 376 when the Huns, moving southwest from their base of operations on the northern coast of the Black Sea, drove unprecedented numbers of Goths across the Danube River into the arms of the bewildered Romans. The two main Gothic groups, the Tervingi and the Greuthungi, felt that asylum under Rome was preferable to extinction at the hands of the Huns. The Huns had set in motion late antiquity's version of the domino effect, something which St. Ambrose of Milan noted around 380 when he wrote that "The Huns threw themselves upon the Alans, the Alans upon the Goths, and the Goths upon the Taifali and Sarmatae … and this is not yet the end" (Expositio Ev. sec. Luc. 10.10).

The assimilation of new ethnic groups into the Roman Empire had a long tradition; however, it had to be accomplished under certain conditions. *Receptio* generally meant that a small group of barbarians would be sent to a part of the Roman Empire far from the traditional home of their tribe. There they would be assimilated into the larger Roman culture under the principle *solve et coagula,* dissolve and re-form. This system began to break down under the exigencies of empire.

In his history of the Goths, Jordanes claims that they originally came from across a body of water, leading some to speculate that their original home was in Gotland, which is to say Scandinavia. At some point they crossed the Baltic and began settlements in what is now Poland and began moving south along the major rivers of that region. Beginning around 150 A.D. a large scale expansion of Wielbark culture took place, one which lasted 70 or 80 years. By the time it was over these tribes had established themselves along the Northern Carpathian Mountains and the shores of the Black Sea. It is at this point, around 200 A.D., that they came in contact with Rome's northern Dacian frontier. Once they made contact with Roman culture, the Wielbark tribes began to adopt Roman technology and culture, and, as a result, their populations began to increase. Since Rome still had things which they considered valuable, that population increase meant pressure on Rome to allow migration into the empire and, hopefully, assimilation as well.

The system of *receptio* began to break down for the same reason that the culture of citizenship began to break down as well, namely, because of military considerations. Just as the demands of an imperial army were destroying the very tax base it needed to survive by grinding the small farmer which supported it into penury, so too military exigencies spelled the doom of *receptio.* Rome found it expedient to use the less and less assimilated Goths where they were needed the most, namely, on the borders it was paying them to defend. That meant that the ethnic groups did not dissolve as they once had. Rome needed them to defend its borders where they were, which meant that no assimilation was taking place at the very time that the average citizen, far from the war theaters to the north, was losing interest in imperial culture for exactly the same reason. The war machine may have been necessary to defend Rome's imperial borders, but in doing so it was bringing about the cultural destruction of the very empire it was supposed to save militarily. The army gobbled up money and alienated the people whom it was designed to defend. It also destroyed *receptio* by concentrating the people who needed to be assimilated the most on the borders where it was least likely to happen.

From the Goth's point of view, contact with the Roman Empire created various effects according to the circumstances. On the one hand Roman technology and culture promoted assimilation, but on the other hand, contact with other groups enhanced their own sense of ethnic identity. The same was true of Romans. Increased contact simultaneously broke down the old identifications and created new ones in its place. Jerome criticized Roman women, who were obviously impressed with the blonde-haired Goths, for bleaching their hair. In general the rule was as simple as the fact that there was a rule at all. As Theoderic put it, the poor Roman wished he were a Goth, whereas the rich Goth wished he were a Roman.

Rome had successfully settled hundreds of thousands of immigrant ethnic groups within its border over its history, but *receptio* meant that assimilation took place on Roman terms. That meant first military conquest, followed by political subjugation which usually took place by breaking up the conquered tribes and settling them widely dispersed across the empire. They were then treated with a combination of the iron fist or the velvet glove depending on how they behaved. If they behaved themselves, ethnic groups in border areas could benefit from trade with outposts of the empire. If they chafed under the yokeof Roman hegemony and gave some indication that they planned to do something about it, they might be surprised by an unexpected visit from one of the nearby military units, which would destroy their village and sell its inhabitants into slavery.

In 376 the Romans manning the Danube frontier of the Roman Empire were faced with a choice. They were too weak to subdue all of the tribes which had been set in motion by Hunnic expansion, and so as a result they decided to admit the Goths as the lesser of two evils and use them to help defend the northern frontier against the more formidable Huns. The sheer number of Goths seeking asylum combined with the numbers of Goth soldiers the Romans needed to keep out the Huns forced the Romans to compromise the normal

principles of *receptio.* In 382, the Roman state granted Goths land for farming and allowed them to maintain their own laws simply because the military situation on the frontier demanded it. Because the empire was overextended, the Roman state had to make a virtue of necessity and grant communal autonomy to large numbers of Goths. The Roman state tried to limit the ethnic damage that unprecedented Gothic immigration was bound to cause by refusing to recognize any one man as the leader of all of the Gothic peoples.

There were, however, many men who aspired to that title. Fritigern was one. Before the Battle of Adrianople, he had sent a secret message to Valens asking him to recognize him as friend *(amicus)* and ally *(socius).* In return for this recognition, Fritigern would do his best to defuse Goth hostility and channel Goth behavior into channels agreeable to the empire. Since *rex socius et amicus* was the title granted to fully recognized kings allied with the empire, Fritigern, it seems safe to say, wanted himself declared *Rex Gothorum,* a title that was both unprecedented and tantamount to treason since no king could rule over a people or territory within the empire's borders. The Goths, in other words, were continuing to function as an ethnic group in spite of pressure to assimilate because physical migration to lands within the borders of the Roman Empire was now having the opposite effect to what was intended under traditional *receptio.*

Contact among different ethnic groups, in other words, did not blur differences; it created the need to differentiate. In other words, the empire, which previously sought to extinguish ethnicity by the tactics of dispersion and assimilation known as *receptio,* ended up creating ethnicity by bringing disparate groups in ever more frequent contact with each other and allowing them, out of simple military necessity, more and more cultural autonomy in the border areas where they were deployed to defend the empire. Goths on the southern bank of the Danube were being paid to defend the empire against the Huns, but they could only do so by remaining Goths, which meant they were subverting the very institution they were being paid to defend.

This situation came to a head in the years following the mass migrations of 376, when the marauding Huns drove the Goths over the Danube in unprecedented numbers. The more isolated a tribe, the less ethnic it is. A tribe living in isolation on an island in the middle of the sea will generally refer to itself not as an ethnic group but rather as "mankind." They will only refer to themselves as an ethnic group after they make contact with another tribe. This is precisely what happened when the Goths crossed the Danube in 376. They were driven by the Huns into the arms of the Romans, who were too weak militarily to repulse them and too weak culturally to assimilate them. As a result of failed *receptio*, the Goths began to see themselves as ethnically unique. Unlike earlier Goths, who had been Romanized by *receptio*, these Goths were ethnicized by the same process. The process of assimilation broke down because the war machine had weakened Roman culture to the point where the average citizen felt he derived no benefit from it. The war machine contributed further to the demise of empire by its manpower needs. Rome needed soldiers on the borders to fight its wars, but that was precisely where they were least likely to assimilate them. Once the war machine became the *raison d'etre* for empire, it contributed to the demise of the very empire it was supposed to save. By turning an unprecedented increase in the numbers of people seeking asylum into soldiers, Rome created an ethnic fifth column. Roman perplexity derived from the fact that never before had such a large group of people asked to be accepted into the empire. Assimilation broke down under the weight of sheer numbers.

For two years following the crossing of the Danube, those Goth tribes roamed around the lands south of the river causing problems, problems which the Emperor Valens tried to solve by exterminating the Goths who were causing them. Instead, on August 9, 378, Valens marched an army which hadn't eaten its mid-day meal into battle with a numerically inferior Goth force, which promptly destroyed it in one of the greatest defeats of the Roman Empire. Valens was killed along with two-thirds of his army, setting into motion a chain of events which ended a little less than 100 years later, when on September 17, 476, Romulus Augustus, the Roman emperor of the West, was deposed by the Gothic chieftain Odovacar, and the Roman Empire, for all practical purposes, ceased to exist.

What happened during the century between the Battle of Adrianople and the fall of Romulus Augustus was ethnogenesis. During this time, the Goths invented themselves as a people. This is not to say that they didn't have their own language and culture before then, but it is to say that by the end of this transitional period, they were no longer willing to hand that culture in at the border in exchange for assimilation on Roman terms. Because of ethnogenesis, Rome was first forced to accept the Goths in unprecedented numbers, and then it was forced to accept them on their own cultural terms, and finally it was forced to accept the Gothic kingdom of Theodoric as the replacement for the Roman Empire. Stilicho was half Goth in terms of his blood, but a Roman — no matter what Jerome said about him — in terms of his culture. Gainas and Frigitern longed for Roman titles. But by the time of Theodoric, which is to say at the beginning of the sixth century and around the time that Benedict was born, Boethius, the flower of Roman aristocracy and Roman culture, had to work for the Goths on their terms or not at all, and when Boethius displeased the Gothic king, he paid for that displeasure with his life.

The crucial transitional figure in this trajectory of ethnogenesis was Alaric, a shadowy figure who first appears in the aftermath of the death of the emperor Theodosius in 395. Taking advantage of the vacuum created by the emperor's death, Alaric demanded "command of an army." No longer satisfied with being an ethnic leader in charge of ethnic troops, Alaric — in 395, at least — wanted to be considered a Roman military man with a proper Roman title in charge of Roman troops. He wanted, in other words, career advancement and was willing to accept assimilation on essentially Roman terms, if not at Roman pleasure, in order to get it.

Alaric was aided in pressing his claims by disunity in the empire. Theodosius died leaving two minor sons behind. Honorius was technically the emperor in the West but he was essentially a pawn in the hands of Stilicho. Arcadius found himself in the same situation at the hands of first Rufinus and then Eutropius in the east. The rivalry between east and west, as a result, created a situation favorable to Alaric's ambitions. Fearing that Stilicho had designs on the East, Eutropius decided to ally himself with Alaric, granting him the generalship of "roman" not just ethnic soldiers as well as the roman title he coveted, most probably command of the troops in Illyricum, *MVM per Illyricum.*

Gainas, another Goth leader at the time, had ambitions similar to Alaric. In April 400 he took matters into his own hands and arranged a military *Putsch* against the eastern empire in Constantinople. Unable to consolidate his power, Gainas did little more than create animus against the Goths in the city he ostensibly ruled.

In July 400 his former political ally Caesarius organized a counter-*Putsch*, in the course of which the citizenry rose up and slaughtered the city's entire Goth population, some 7,000 people. Gainas fled to the Goths' ancestral lands north of the Danube, where he tried to create a Gothic kingdom, but times had changed. The Huns now controlled the area north of the Danube, and it was there that the Hunnic chieftain eventually tracked down Gainas and killed him, sending his head back to Constantinople as a sign of his feelings toward Rome.

By the time Gainas' head arrived in Constantinople, Alaric was at odds with both halves of the Roman Empire, hoping that both sides would ignore what had become a *de facto* Gothic kingdom within its borders. At this point fate intervened, again in Alaric's favor. The winter of 405-06 was brutally cold, so cold in fact that by December both the Rhine and the Danube had frozen across, effectively erasing the barrier that guarded the empire's northern frontier. In addition to freezing the Rhine, the frigid weather also created famine among the Vandals, Sueves, and Alans, who, facing starvation, knew of only one sure source of food, the Roman granaries in the fortified towns along the now passable border.

Stilicho, who was quite capable of defeating Alaric, found himself now drawn north to deal with the invading Alans, Vandals, and Sueves in the vicinity of Mainz and Worms. In 407, the pressure of events forced Honorius to cut Britain loose from the empire. From that moment on, the remaining defenders of Roman culture in Britain were on their own in defending the remnants of that culture and their own lives against the ever bolder Celtic tribes to the North. (Whatever basis the legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table has in historical fact stems from this moment in history.) The Roman withdrawal prompted Constantine III of Britain to declare himself emperor and begin his own march on Rome by crossing the English Channel in 408. Driven to panic by Constantine's

campaign and the Rhine crossings in Germany, Honorius turned on Stilicho and had him killed in the summer of 408. The fact that the emperor removed his most capable general at the very moment when hordes of barbarians were streaming across Rome's increasingly porous borders emboldened Alaric further.

Sensing that his moment had come, Alaric at this point began moving toward Rome. He was aided by the fact that the passes in the Balkans had not been guarded for years, but other events conspired to help him as well. One of the consequences of the overthrow of Stilicho was that the Roman troops turned on the Goths living in Italian cities and massacred them. Now the Goths who thought they were fighting as part of the Roman legion felt betrayed, and with nowhere else to turn, they joined Alaric in his march toward Rome. Nothing helps ethnogenesis like genocide, and genocide had been inflicted on the assimilation-minded Goths twice within one decade.

Alaric wanted a deal from the Romans, usually something which involved lots of gold, but instead of either negotiating with Alaric or engaging him in battle, Honorius decided to hole up in the, at the time, impregnable city of Ravenna on Italy's northern Adriatic coast. As a result of Honorius's refusal to deal with him, Alaric had time to think over his aspirations, and the repeated massacres of Goths at the hands of the Romans, combined with their refusal to either negotiate or do battle, seems to have brought about a change of heart in the man who, only a few years before, seemed so avid to acquire Roman titles. Rather than defend Rome as the *MVM per Illyricum*, Alaric decided to sack it under the auspices of his new identity as the *Rex Gothorum*, the king of the Goths. Surrounded by its swamps and walls and safe in Ravenna, Honorius made it clear that he was not going to defend Rome, and once that became clear, he forced Alaric's hand. In frustration over his inability to carve out a role for himself within the empire, Alaric decided to replace the empire with a new Gothic kingdom, with himself as *Rex Gothorum* as its new head.

As a result, after making provision that Christians would be spared if they took refuge in churches, Alaric sacked Rome on August 24, 410, the date that is normally associated with the fall of the Roman Empire. The dream of a Gothic successor state was born out of a combination of Goth demographics, Roman weakness, and most of all, thwarted Gothic ambition. The Goths wanted to be Romans, up to a certain point. When it became clear that those ambitions could not be satisfied on Roman terms, the Goths decided to abandon their desire for assimilation and seize what they wanted on Gothic terms. The dream of the Gothic Empire was born out of disappointment. The Gothic successor state was Alaric's dream, but it was not a dream he could realize. One year after sacking Rome, Alaric died and was buried along with his share of the loot beneath the bed of the Brumentius River.

ETHNIC AMBIGUITY

Part of the loot that didn't get buried was Galla Placidia, Honorious' sister, whom Alaric married as one of the final acts of his life. After Alaric died, the kingdom passed to his brother-in-law Athaulf, who married Galla Placidia as well. The facts are clear enough, but the gesture is still full of ethnic ambiguity. Did Alaric marry the sister of the emperor as a way of reconciling with the emperor who had spurned him, or was the marriage a way of showing the people who spurned him that he had subjugated the empire which had failed to grant him his wishes? The ethnic ambiguity is only deepened by Athaulf's famous but equally ambiguous claim, found in Orosius, that he had first thought "to replace the Roman Empire — Romania — with Gothia, but then decided instead to use Gothic arms to uphold Roman rule."

Eventually the empire was forced to settle with the Goths in 418, granting them cultural and political autonomy as a Gothic kingdom in territory formerly part of the Roman Empire. The result was a Gothic dynasty which was to last uninterrupted until Justinian tried to take it back in earnest in the second quarter of the sixth century. Allowing the Goths this much cultural and political autonomy meant the end of the Roman Empire. The Fall of Rome and the rise of ethnicity were, in other words, one and the same thing. In 453, Attila the Hun died after too much carousing on his wedding night. What followed was a power struggle among his sons which led to the collapse of the Hunnic empire in Hungary, the gradual retreat of the Huns back to the shores of the Black Sea and the rise to power once again of the Goths, whom the Huns had driven into the arms of Rome 177 years before.

The net result of all this strife was that the various contending ethnic groups which had ravaged Italy for the past century and a half concluded that Rome had nothing more to offer. During the course of the fifth century more and more barbarian tribes found themselves fighting over an ever decreasing financial base of plunder. In this context, the idea of empire became increasingly meaningless, primarily because it had been bankrupt for some time, was unable to pay its own troops, and, more than that, no longer controlled anything of value. Its financial bankruptcy only mirrored its cultural bankruptcy. The empire ended because no one derived any benefit from belonging to it any more. And that occurred because it lost cultural control over the small community when it became a war culture. Now what used to be the empire had become the battleground for two contending cultures, the ethnic and the religious. The notion of empire had become too abstract to demand allegiance. In its place, there was now the Christian community, on the one hand, based on God's word, and the ethnic group based on loyalty to a man, the tribal leader, and the tribe. Citizenship had disappeared in the increasingly draconian means that had been taken to preserve it.

In 475 Orestes, the commander of the Roman troops, named his son Romulus Augustus emperor. Since few coveted the title, naming his son emperor was the easy part. The hard part was finding the money to pay his increasingly unruly soldiers. Long gone were the days when a Roman served in the army at his own expense because he believed in the virtues which the Republic embodied. Now strapped by more and more expenditures that had to be drawn from ever dwindling resources, Orestes found that he could not command soldiers that he could not pay. Sensing a moment of opportunity, Odovacar mobilized the soldiers in a *coup d'etat*, murdered Orestes, deposed Romulus Augustus, and set himself up in his place. At that point the Roman Empire ceased to exist. Odovacar "then sent an embassy to Constantinople, which merely stated the obvious: there was no longer any need for an Emperor in the west" (Malchus fr. 14).

Although the Goths were nominally Christians, having been converted to Arianism by Ulfila, who translated the Bible into their language and told them that Jesus Christ was "like" God, the world, from the Roman point of view, was now under the control of people who were controlled by their passions, as noted by Peter Heather:

> Where Roman individuals and their society were rational, barbarians were held to be controlled by their physical passions. They were thus (to Roman eyes) faithless and inconstant, a prey to their every bodily whim, particularly those to do with sex, violence and alcohol. … Rationality was defined as the individual's ability to control bodily passions by exercise of the intellect. Immersion in classical literature exposed the individual to accumulated exempla of virtue and vice, which, if properly digested, enabled the body to be controlled. Barbarians, by contrast, were prey to their every passion, quite unable to steer a sensible course, and particularly even to gratifying the desires of the flesh. For Roman society as a whole, the greater rationality of its individual members meant that they were prepared to subordinate their immediate desires to the rule of written law: the guarantee of an ordered society. Thus for Romans the rule of law — encapsulated, in the late imperial period in the concept of civilitas — became the great distinguishing feature of their society.

Because of its defective nature, Arianism was not able to dominate Goth ethnicity. Instead, the opposite happened and religion, in this instance, took on the ethnic characteristics of the tribe which adopted it. Christianity had absorbed the empire because it provided the community which the empire could no longer offer them as citizens. In coming in contact with ethnicity, however, Christianity was in the exact opposite situation. Here it did not need to supply a sense of community to an administrative entity grown too big and too abstract to satisfy men's longings. The ethnic culture was in many ways the exact opposite of imperial culture. It was not abstract at all. In fact it could hardly transcend itself. Its ultimate law was the good of the *ethnos.* When a defective form of Christianity like Arianism made contact with *ethnos*, it was simply absorbed by the tribe it sought to convert.

A sober man looking at the prospects for Europe as of this time might have extrapolated from what happened when the Gothic tribe converted to Arianism. Extrapolating from this paradigm, he most probably would have concluded that all across Europe Christianity would have been incorporated into a myriad conglomeration of ethnic Christianities, not unlike the proliferation of Protestant sects in the wake of the reformation. The thing that prevented this from happening was the emergence of "Roman" Catholicism under the leadership of the popes. The contact between the Roman Empire and Christianity had resulted in a kind of cross-fertilization. The "Roman" Catholics had absorbed Roman ideals of universality, administration, and order, but at the same time they had absorbed the Roman Empire by establishing small communities within its boundaries.

Romanitas, in other words, had to change in order to remain the same. Or, to use a Christian metaphor, it had to die in order to be reborn to eternal life. The Roman genius for administration and community would eventually find expression in the monastic reforms

of Benedict of Nursia, which, as promoted by popes like Gregory the Great and "emperors" like Charlemagne, would insure the development of a unified European culture which was at once ethnic and universal. "The Papacy," wrote Thomas Hobbes, "is not other than the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire sitting crowned upon the grave thereof." After citing Hobbes' remark, Chadwick claims that it "would not be so irritating to all who care for the western Catholic tradition if it contained no element of truth." Without "Roman" Catholic intermediaries like Benedict and Gregory the Great, the ethnic war culture of the Goths would have clashed interminably with the high classical culture of Greece and Rome, as they did at the court of Theodoric, leaving nothing but tragedy and bloodshed in their wake.

In 486, one more Gothic chieftain, in this case Theodoric, rebelled against the emperor, in this case Zeno, the emperor of the east, the only part of the empire still in existence. On March 5, Theodoric entered Ravenna to negotiate a settlement with Odovacar according to which Theodoric agreed to share power. The agreement lasted all of ten days and ended when Theodoric murdered Odovacar at a banquet. As his sword cut Odovacar in half, Theodoric is said to have claimed that the unfortunate late King of the Goths "didn't have a bone in his body."

ROMANITAS

In spite of his behavior, Theodoric was no unlettered barbarian. He had been educated in Constantinople and portrayed himself as a devotee of *Romanitas*, which is to say the importance of doing things "the divinely ordered Roman way." In this regard, Theodoric felt that morality needed education as its indispensable support. Morality was important to the state because it was through morality that the citizen learned self-control, which was the trait that made obedience to Roman law possible. The belief that a man who cannot govern himself cannot govern others was the basis for the American experiment in ordered liberty and representative democracy in the 18th century, and, like Theodoric, America's founding fathers learned their lessons from Roman models. In order to foster public order through the moral order, Theodoric subsidized the pay of grammarians, something which gave his rule uncanny similarities with later American presidents. It was also something which calmed the fears of the Roman aristocracy. Theodoric may have been by blood a barbarian Goth, but the Roman elite had always put more stock in culture than biology. If Theodoric were willing to promote *Romanitas*, the Roman elite were willing to work with him.

In reality, neither party had a choice. The Roman senate had been militarily impotent since the reforms of Diocletian 200 years before, and so had to accept the Gothic yoke whether they wanted to or not. The Gothic kings had no choice in the matter either. Theodoric may have been sincere in his devotion to Roman civilization, but it was equally clear to him that the Goths were unable to run that system on their own. The Roman system of government demanded literacy among the officers of the bureaucracy and their assistants. It demanded a tax system based on meticulous written records and it demanded adherence to a relatively abstract code of written law — all of which were foreign to the Gothic political system of ethnic and personal loyalty. If Theodoric wanted a state as extensive as the Roman Empire in the west, then he would need Romans to run it for him, especially since one of his first acts was the institution of an income tax.

One of the people who ran the machinery of Government for Theodoric was a Roman aristocrat of impeccable lineage by the name of Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius. As his name indicated, Boethius, who was born around 480, was the scion of Rome's noblest families. Boethius' father died when he was seven years old, but that blow was softened when he was adopted by the equally august and aristocratic Quintus Aurelius Memmius Symmachus, whose daughter Rusticiana he eventually married.

Like the confrontation between Totila and Benedict, which took place roughly 20 years after Boethius' death, the eventual confrontation between Theodoric and Boethius was equally pregnant with symbolism. Unlike the confrontation between Goth barbarian and Christian monk, a confrontation between the war and peace societies of the time which eventuated in the medieval ideal of the Christian knight and a pan-European culture which was both ethnic and Christian, as well as both local and universal in every sense of the word, the confrontation between Boethius and Theodoric ended less happily. The fact that it ended as tragically as it did indicates that the chasm separating Gothic ethnicity and classical high culture was simply too wide to bridge, in spite of the best of intentions of both Goth and Roman and an initial collaboration which lasted, in the case of Theodoric, roughly 14 years.

In the early years of his reign, Theodoric was smart enough to recognize that a man with Boethius' abilities would be a great asset to the administration of the Gothic successor kingdom in Italy. Boethius had come to Theodoric's attention because of his early writings on music and arithmetic. Because of his expertise in arithmetic, Theodoric asked Boethius to fix the exchange rate between the copper denarius, the denomination in which the legions were paid, and the gold Solidus — the dollar of its time, which is to say, the stable, universally convertible currency of late antiquity. Because of his expertise in music, Boethius was asked to find a harpist to send to Clovis, the Frankish king recently converted to the Catholic faith. Since Boethius was familiar with Plato's idea that the various musical modes affected the soul directly, Theodoric probably conceived of this early foray into music as a form of psychological warfare — or at least an early version of Muzak — hoping that the right music would influence the Frankish king in ways favorable to Gothic interests. Theodoric also asked Boethius to design both a sundial and a water clock for the Burgundian king, probably to impress him with the scope and power of Roman technology.

In 510 Boethius was named consul. In 522 he was named *Magister Officium.* In the same year his sons were named consuls. It was in just about every way the high point of his life. For those familiar with the wheel of fortune, the high point also meant the moment when decline begins, and this was true of the man who would explicate fickle Fortuna for the Middle Ages as well. One of Boethius' duties as Master of the Offices, a post that had been established as an essentially military position in the days of Diocletian, was running the court's intelligence operations. That meant that as the ears and eyes of the king he had a responsibility to report anything that might threaten the security of the monarch or the realm. By this point, Theodoric was over 70 years old and worried about who was going to succeed him. His policy of Arian aloofness, neither favoring nor persecuting the Catholics, was an early version of the separation of church and state, and it had been extremely successful in maintaining a balance of power between church and state, as well as between the various religions and the various ethnic groups associated with those religions.

The merits of that policy came to an abrupt end when the Acacian schism was healed in 519. Once the religious breach between the eastern and western empires was healed, it seemed only logical that Justinian would be more likely to represent the interests of the Catholics in Italy better than an Arian Goth. The political advantages at the heart of this religious issue probably lay at the heart of Justinian's attempts to heal the schism. The newfound unity in the empire placed Theodoric in an anomalous situation at precisely the moment when the issue of his age and who was to succeed him had made him, if not paranoid, then somewhat sensitive. He began to imagine plots hatched against him, and if there were no actual plots, then certainly speculation was rife in the court as the senators looked beyond his death to prospects of more complete union with the empire in the east.

PALACE DOGS

During his years as a civil servant, Boethius had earned the reputation of being a courageous and truthful administrator, which meant that as a result of those virtues he had created many enemies among the group whom he referred to as the dogs of the palace. When a courtier by the name of Albinus was charged with being in treasonous correspondence with Constantinople, two of the palace dogs — Cyprian and Opilo — took the opportunity to implicate Boethius in the case. Cyprian had gained Theodoric's favor by being an avid assimilator, by learning the Goth tongue and arranging to have his children play with Goth children. As Master of the Offices and head of Theodoric's intelligence operation, it was Boethius' job to ferret out conspiracy. The difficulty came in the definition of the term. What Theodoric saw as treason, Boethius saw as reasonable discussion of topics pertinent to the Senate.

Boethius flatly denounced Cyprian's accusation against Albinus as false, but added in a way that would prove fatal to his cause, "But if Albinus did it, both I and all the senate have acted with single counsel." Boethius rebuked Theodoric for condemning Albinus without a trial, but Theodoric took Boethius' defense as an admission of guilt, and Boethius soon found himself in the same predicament as the man he had defended. According to his own account, Boethius was charged with suppressing evidence against Albinus and having written letters himself expressing hopes for "roman liberty" from Gothic domination. The last charge went to the heart of the cultural differences between Gothic and Roman rule. Boethius was charged with black magic and studies into the "secrets of nature" as a way of furthering his career. Theodoric's fears in this regard had been enhanced by the appearance of a comet in 519. Comets could presage "disaster" or a change in regime. Theodoric obviously feared the latter, and he felt as well that Boethius' knowledge of the arts of astronomy could aid him in bringing about the end of Gothic hegemony in Italy.

Taking his cue from Proclus, Boethius had engaged in the study of horoscopes, something which further fueled Theodoric's suspicions that he was a man "transported and rapt in secret studies" to the great danger of his kingdom. When conflict came, the ethnic chasm between Goth and Roman, invisible during better days, reopened with fatal consequences for Boethius. *Romanitas* was simply not strong enough on either side to bridge the ethnic gap. Boethius was thrown into prison in Pavia and eventually tortured and executed in gruesome fashion by having a cord twisted around his head until his eyes popped out of their sockets.

It was during his imprisonment in Pavia that Boethius wrote his masterpiece, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, the classic lament of the just man being persecuted precisely for being just. It is also the lament of the man of philosophical disposition in a decadent age, who looks around him and sees

> the wicked workshops of lawless men overflowing in joy and jubilation; every last degenerate making threats with brand new deceptions and denunciations; good men fallen laid low by their fear of this crisis of mine; every criminal encouraged to dare a crime because he will go unpunished and to commit it because he will be rewarded; and the guiltless deprived not only of their safety but even of their defense.

When Boethius tells his readers that "no enthusiasm brought me to high office other than the enthusiasm for the community of all good people," it's difficult not to believe him. He is the quintessential representative of *noblesse oblige. The Consolation of Philosophy* gives voice to the eternal lament of the man of philosophical mind who gravitates to the halls of power to do good, only to find that by doing good he has accomplished his own undoing. Like Seneca, who died at the hands of Nero before him, and St. Thomas More after him, Boethius finds himself in the eternal predicament of those who seek to bring truth to power.

But a note of temporality pervades the *Consolation* as well. Boethius is clearly writing at a point when the empire has reached the terminal state of decline. In fact, his book is the period at the end of that sentence. So Thomas More might have said that "the gift of high offices … vanish[es] into thin air just as soon as they come into the presence of those who do not reckon them to be high offices." But Boethius could say it in the light of personal experience, having seen the imperial offices decline under barbarian hegemony. Nothing dispels the aura surrounding high offices as quickly as the incomprehension of "foreign nations." "If they are worthless in the reckoning of other nations," Boethius wonders, "what is the beauty they have within themselves that is worth craving?" The Praetorship, to give just one example from Boethius' storehouse of images of the empire in decline, "was once a great office, but it is now an empty name and a heavy burden for a senator's resources. Once, if a man had control of the public grain supply he was called The Great; now, what is more disreputable than that particular prefecture?"

So Theodoric was right about that comet; it did presage disaster. The comet had become a self-fulfilling prophecy, but the fault which Theodoric perceived in the stars sprang ultimately from his own disordered ambition, an ambition that could in no way prevent the dissolution of his kingdom. In fact, if anything, murdering Boethius and Symmachus and Pope John probably convinced the Roman aristocracy that Theodoric's *Romanitas* was nothing more than a thin veneer over a barbarian soul whose ethnicity was his destiny.Confirmed in their belief that barbarians couldn't control their passions, the Roman elite longed even more ardently for union with the equally civilized Greek east.

Theodoric died in August of 526, scarcely two years after the death of Boethius, one week before the announced takeover of all of the Catholic churches in the city of Ravenna. Like Arius, his religious forebear, Theodoric died when something went wrong with his stomach, prompting Gibbon to claim that his death was caused either by a miracle or poison. Procopius tells the story of Theodoric being served the head of a great fish at banquet. He was unable to eat it, however, because the head and eyes of the fish reminded Theodoric's guilt-ridden conscience of the recently murdered Symmachus. So much so in fact, that Theodoric was forced to leave the banquet hall to compose himself. By the time Theodoric's alcoholic successor Altharic died in October of 534, the Romans had had quite enough of Gothic passion and were longing for reunion with the east.

And Justinian, nephew and successor to Justin, was only too happy to oblige. As one more straw in the wind during this momentous period of history when one age ended and an new one began, Justinian closed down the persistently pagan Academy of Athens, causing the Platonists there to flee to the court of Khurso I of Persia. Justinian may have done this to get the Academy's rich endowment, but it is just as likely that he saw that the pagan, secular classical tradition of Greece and Rome had had its day and was

now going to be replaced by something more frankly sectarian. There was increasingly little secular space left in the world which succeeded the Roman Empire. With the advent of Islam one century later, it would disappear completely. Thus, in the short space of less than a decade, Boethius died; the Gothic kingdom began to dissolve; the academy at Athens was closed down; war settled over the Italian peninsula as a way of life for the next two generations; and, as if in response to all of that, Benedict founded his monastery on top of Monte Cassino.

AN OASIS

Monte Cassino thrived in time of war. In fact, Benedict's monastery was conceived as an oasis of Christian peace in a sea of ethnic struggle, and it is because of that reputation that people sick of the failed empire and the anarchy which followed in the wake of its collapse flocked to the monastery for peace and shelter. In the summer 536 the Byzantine general Belisarius, acting as the agent of Justinian's imperial ambition, laid siege to Naples and eventually the town fell into his hands in November of that year. Had nothing intervened, Justinian would have united the empire in the wake of Belisarius' conquests. But something did intervene. Khurso I, emperor of Persia, attacked the eastern imperial outpost of Antioch, and Justinian's triumphs during the 530s in the west were reversed by a resurgent Persian empire in the east in the 540s.

Sensing that Justinian's preoccupation with the Persian armies in the east provided him with a moment of opportunity, Totila started pillaging Italy as his Gothic predecessors since the time of Alaric had done. It was on this campaign to retake Rome in 545 that Totila met with Benedict. At that time both Totila and Belisarius were contending for Rome. In anticipation of Belisarius' victory, Rusticiana, Boethius' widow, had all of the statues of Theodoric in Rome smashed. When Totila, and not Belisarius, captured Rome in December 545, her life was in jeopardy, but Totila had evidently taken to heart Benedict's admonition to be less cruel. She lost the property which the Goths had restored but escaped with her life when Totila saved her from the angry Goths in the city. Benedict also prophesied that Rome would not be destroyed by the barbarians, although he did say that "it will be shaken by tempests and lightnings, hurricanes and earthquakes, until finally it lies buried in its own ruins." Benedict's vision was as miraculous as it was prophetic because at the time Totila had already destroyed one-third of the wall around the city and his troops were beginning to set fire to its buildings. Only a plea from Belisarius to spare "the greatest and most glorious of all the cities under the sun, … the most wonderful sight in the world," persuaded him to stop.

Benedict was born in an austere high mountain valley known as Nursia, in Umbria, at the beginning of the sixth century, shortly after Theodoric had become king. He founded Monte Cassino at around the same time that Boethius reached the pinnacle of his career and shortly before his fall from power. Combine Theodoric and Boethius and you end up with Theodoric and Boethius. This gulf was too wide to bridge. Combine classical high culture and Goth ethnicity, and you end up with one more dead philosopher and the collapse of the Goth dynasty. The Romans needed the Goths for protection every bit as much as the Goths needed the Romans to run the empire for them, but in the end no *modus vivendi* was possible between them. If it hadn't been for Benedict and "Roman" Catholicism, the tragedy of Theodoric and Boethius would have set the pattern for the next millennium. Benedict's Rule was the bridge between Goth ethnicity and Roman high culture that prevented that tragedy from happening. Benedict created a cultural institution that incorporated the administrative genius of Roman culture and replicated it among the barbarian tribes throughout Europe bringing about the simultaneous replication and exaltation of the culture the Goths couldn't assimilate on their own.

Benedict's parents were apparently not poor, because they were able to continue his education by sending him to Rome. However, Benedict spent only a short time in Rome. The dangers of vice associated with student life combined with the uninspired teaching at the academy there drove him quickly out of the city into the Sabine Hills where he joined a band of hermits living as anchorites. Benedict later claimed that the living word of Christ meant more to him than the written word of the academy. As a result he spent several years living the life of the hermit at the as yet undiscovered site of a monastery known as Vicovaro.

When the abbot of Vicovaro died, the monks asked Benedict to assume the role of abbot. Apparently they regretted their decision, because shortly after electing him abbot the monks tried to poison him with a glass of poisoned wine. When Benedict tried to bless the glass it shattered miraculously saving him for the work God wanted him to do. Sensing that he wasn't wanted, Benedict left Vicovaro without holding any grudges and relocated at Subiaco, around 80 kilometers southeast of Rome, where he founded his own monastery. According to the testimony of Gregory the Great, Benedict founded 12 monasteries with 12 monks apiece. Each of these monasteries was autonomous; each had its own abbot who was not required to be subject to an archabbot, as had been the case with Pachomious, the man who organized monastic life in the deserts of Egypt during the third century.

NO HEROIC ASCETICISM

According to Gregory's *Dialogues*, Benedict could already have made contact with monasticism in the immediate surroundings of Nursia. If so, what he discovered was different than the institution he transformed by his rule. The monastic life had been in existence for hundreds of years before Benedict was born. But it was known more for its heroic asceticism than for its promotion of community. Men would go off into the deserts of Egypt or Syria inspired by the radical simplicity of the gospels and the idea that nothing else mattered. Once there, they more often than not lived a hermit's life and dealt with the temptations that came their way as a result in the spiritual version of single, hand-to-hand combat.

In the beginning of his spiritual quest, Benedict did much the same thing. After fleeing Rome, Benedict lived a hermit's life at both Enfide and Subiaco, feeling that the way to inner purification could be found only through strict solitude. At Subiaco, Benedict lived in strict solitude in a place remarkable for its natural beauty, its lake and the rocky slopes leading down to the river Anio. However, natural beauty and isolation did not figure in his plan for the monastic life. For whatever reason, around the year 529, Benedict moved again, this time to a mountain 90 miles south of Rome known as Monte Cassino.

After destroying an altar to Apollo on top of the mountain and erecting two oratories — one dedicated to St. John the Baptist and the other to St. Martin — in its place, Benedict set out to write his rule. Here he seems to have made a break with the monastic tradition as it had existed up to that time in both the West and the East. Moving away from Rome should not mean moving away from his fellow monks and fellow man. Scholars now feel that the Rule of the Master influenced Benedict in the writing of his own rule and note vice versa. Familiar with the Rule of the Master, Benedict wrote his own rule while at Monte Cassino, and in doing so, made a unique contribution to the monastic tradition which had existed, by then, for hundreds of years, a contribution which would have a far-reaching influence on Europe. In fact, it would create Europe out of all the tribes who were now marauding and plundering that piece of geography now that the guarantor of civil order, the Roman Empire, was no longer existent in any significant form in the lands west of the Adriatic Sea and north of the Alps.

Benedict may have given up on the academy as the vehicle of classical culture; he may have given up on the Roman Empire as well; but he had internalized the very thing he had relinquished by applying the Latin genius for order and law to a monastic tradition that had emphasized feats of individual asceticism. The monastic life of the people who admired the fact that Simon Stylites spent 50 years sitting on top of a pillar was only coincidentally social. Benedict's Rule turned monasticism into something essentially social, first of all because, as Aristotle had said, man was himself an essentially social being, but also because living with other men was oftentimes more spiritually trying (as well as more spiritually rewarding) than living alone, no matter how heroic the acts of individual asceticism those monks might perform.

The aim of Benedict's Rule was the cultivation of the common life. The monastery was now a school, one that came into existence at precisely the moment when the academy at Athens went out of existence, but it was a "school of service of the Lord." Benedict's Rule seems mild in comparison with the rules of Pachomius and St. Columban in terms of the rigor demanded of the monks, but it involved a much higher complexity of social organization and because of this complexity, it would achieve things undreamt of by earlier monastic groups. Benedict's Rule was less vertical than the Rule of the Master. As a result of its horizontal component — dealing with the brother in the poor man, the guest, and in the sick — the Rule of St. Benedict fostered cultural developments that produced benefits for Europe in ways that the ascetic superstars of Syria did not.

Benedict's Rule was based on obedience, because monks reside "in community monasteries, not living by their own free will, nor obeying their own desires and pleasures, but walking by the judgment and orders of another, they desire to have an abbot rule them." The stress on obedience can be seen in the fact that the opening line of Benedict's Rule mentions it explicitly. Obedience is the antithesis of *libido dominandi,* the first and ultimate law of the City of Man. By beginning with obedience, Benedict lays the foundation of his notion of the monastic life squarely on the social nature of man. A monk living alone has no need of obedience because there is no one, other than God, whom he can obey. As a result the monk who lives alone can too easily be led astray by his own unaided notion of the ascetic life.

By beginning with obedience Benedict was saying that living in community was in many ways more difficult than the great ascetical achievements of the Desert Fathers. Benedict did not neglect asceticism. He reoriented it toward community and made it serve community rather than letting it flourish all by itself, thereby running the danger of becoming an athletic sort of exercise.

Obedience leads to stability, another pillar of Benedictine monasticism. There were abuses of the monastic life even in Benedict's day, at what we would call the dawn of the monastic era. Monks were plagued by self-will, the *radix malorum* of all social organizations, like everyone else. Benedict's great discovery was to find the antidote to self-will, not in heroic acts of asceticism, but rather in obedience to the abbot. Monks who shun obedience are driven not by love of God and love of man, but rather by appetite. "What their appetites desire is for them the law," Benedict writes. "All their own views and wishes they call holy; what they do not want they consider not to be allowed." One of the worst abuses of the monastic life, according to Benedict, was the wandering or "gyrovagous" monk. "Their whole life long," Benedict continues, "they flit from country to country, staying as guests for three or four days in the cells of various monks; always adrift and never stable, slaves of their own whims and the pleasures of the palate, and in all points worse than the sarabaites."

Monks, according to Benedict's Rule, took a vow of stability, which means that they were bound to a particular place. Once cities made a comeback in Europe during the 11th and 12th centuries, the Church would dispense with this emphasis on stability and allow new orders to come into existence based purely on what they did, orders like the order of preachers or Dominicans and later still the Jesuits. If the Benedictines had not bound themselves to one place, however, it is unlikely that the cities which became the base for the new orders could ever have come into existence.

By binding themselves to a particular place, the monks could either reestablish (and develop) a culture which had been destroyed by

war or barbarism or both, or in the case of the wilderness areas, they could establish a culture in the first place *ab ovo.* Neither cultural option would work without stability because culture in its most basic sense has to do with cult and cultivation, and people who were constantly on the move would never be able to understand what would bear cultivation, much less what would grow well in a particular area, without engaging in the time-consuming process of trial and error. To give a specific instance, a Greek senator from Asia Minor who had been sent to the Danube basin as governor felt that the natives there led "the most miserable existence of all mankind," because "they cultivate no olives and they drink no wine." The vineyards and orchards along the Danube, in the shadow of places like Kloster Gottweig in Austria, produce the wine which they produce today because 1,000 years ago Benedictine monks took the vow of stability and, being rooted in one place, spent their time trying to figure out what would grow in that particular soil. Those who don't hang around, never figure that out.

Rootlessness is, as a result, the enemy of all culture, and so a society which promotes constant motion, as ours does, will excel at mechanical replication, which will in turn extinguish whatever possibilities a particular place might potentially produce as local culture. This is true of every area of culture, but it is most apparent in architecture and cuisine. Nothing is as monotonous as the interstate highway system and the culture it has spawned, unless it is perhaps the airline industry and the airports it has produced. The food in both places is the same. Standardization is a function of constant motion, and constant motion is a function of cheap energy. As a result, we now live under an empire whose *raison d'etre* is providing access to oil in a self-defeating vicious circle, just as the Roman Empire destroyed the very culture it set out to save through the crushing taxation and uncontrolled immigration that it needed to keep the war machine going. The more energy, the more motion; the more motion, the more standardization; the more standardization, the less difference; the less difference, the less incentive to move. The culture of motion ends up being an exercise in self-frustration and futility, as universal use of the automobile as a form of mass transportation has shown.

STABILITAS LOCI

Stability, on the other hand, fosters what is unique to each particular place. Without stability, one could say there is no place. Thus, Benedict created Europe on the macro level by providing the cultural lingua franca that would unite that continent's warring tribes, but he created Europe on the micro level as well, by creating the particular places that would end up being united. Europe without Benedict was Totila, which is to say marauding rootless, placeless, wandering, gyrovagous, plundering ethnicity using Rome's roads as routes of easy conquest. Benedict's Rule was the antidote to the barbarism which had filled the empire's empty forms. Stability meant the antithesis of empty imperial structures — *i.e.*, roads — now filled with barbarian content — *i.e.*, rootless pillaging hordes. It meant the creation of real places based on real culture, all of which could converse with each other in a system that united those rooted ethnicities in something universal. That new universal was the Catholic Church, but the cultural form which allowed the Catholic Church to be a universal institution in Europe, rather than the equivalent of the *lex Gothorum,* the tribal Arianism of the Goths, was the Benedictine monastery.

Benedict's monastic vision was based on a theology, especially his intense reverence for the divinity of Christ and the Trinity, which can be explained, at least in part, as a reaction to the Arianism of the Goth ruling class in Italy at the time. But his monasticism was also uniquely designed to deal with the exigencies of the times, which meant dealing with the collapse of infrastructure that accompanied the collapse of empire. Each monastery was to be self-sufficient. It was to have its own source of water within its walls and it was to produce its own food. This involved another revolutionary change in social organization, namely, the elevation of work, often physical work, to one of the pillars of community life. Athens could philosophize because helots did the brute menial work which made the leisure necessary for philosophy possible. The monks were not philosophers, but they did spend a good deal of their time in prayer. More than that, the monastery was an instrument of middle-brow culture which could be widely disseminated. The first thing that an illiterate peasant from Rhetia or Syria had to do after joining the monastery was to learn how to read, because if he couldn't read he would remain forever cut off from the Bible.

The collapse of the empire brought about a great simplification of life. Since Christians knew the plan, the big picture, since they knew what was essential and essentially how the story of history was going to end, they could come up with a radically simplified version of life as the alternative to the complex but failed Roman Empire. That new simplification was known as the Rule of St. Benedict. Benedict in this regard was not unlike Thoreau, another great simplifier when it came to living arrangements. Thoreau dealt with the transition of New England from farming communities to industrial power by heading in the opposite direction of his contemporaries, Emerson in particular. The train epitomized progress for his contemporaries, but Thoreau was intent on deconstructing that progress into more human components. Thoreau could take a train to Boston, but in order to get on the train, he needed money, and to get money he needed to find a job. Once he had a job he had to put a bit of money away, to save up for the ticket, so eventually it would have taken him weeks to get to Boston on the train, whereas if he had started walking immediately, he would have gotten there the same day.

SIMPLIFICATION

Benedict's Rule manifests the same sort of simplification. Since he knew the plan of salvation, he could eliminate whatever was unnecessary. He could create a radically stripped down version of community. On the other hand, Benedict complexified monasticism as the world had known it up to that time by making it compatible with the classical notion of man as an intrinsically social being. That meant that works of heroic asceticism, sitting on pillars for years on end, etc., were subordinated to the goal of community life, and that idea when it came in contact with the various ethnic groups in Europe would have far-reaching consequences for world history. "The Benedictine monastery," according to Christopher Dawson,

> was a state in miniature with a settled hierarchy and constitution and an organized economic life. From the first it was a land-owning corporation which possessed villas and serfs and vineyards, and the monastic economy occupies a larger place in the rule of St. Benedict than in any of the earlier rules. Hence the importance of co-operative labour which filled so large a part of the life of the Benedictine monk, for St. Benedict was inspired by the ideals which St. Augustine had set forth in his treatise *De opera monachorum* and had an equal detestation of the idle and "gyrovagous" monks who had done so much to bring monasticism into disrepute in the West.

Cassiodorus — roughly ten years younger than Boethius, and like him a scholar-bureaucrat at the court of Theodoric — gives some indication of the hold that the monastic idea had on all classes of society and what Boethius might have done had he lived as long, when he abandoned court life and founded his "Vivarium" in southern Italy. The Vivarium was at once a monastery and a school, Cassiodorus being the creator of the first program of monastic studies. The fact that someone of his classical erudition would follow in the footsteps of Benedict showed how the monastery was the true heir of the classical tradition. The classical tradition could continue in existence by changing to deal with the changed circumstances brought about by the disappearance of the empire in the west, and Benedict's Rule was the vehicle of that preservation. Through the initiative of Gregory the Great and subsequent popes, Benedict's Rule became, in Dawson's words, "the Roman standard of the monastic life and finally the universal type of Western monasticism." Once it fired the imagination of the Anglo-Saxon monks in general and St. Boniface in particular, it brought order and classical coherence to the chaotic ethnic existence of the Germanic tribes on both sides of the Rhine, as well as the formation of new centers of culture in Ireland, Northumbria, and ultimately the Carolingian empire. It was this development which prompted Newman to call the six hundred years following the collapse of the Roman Empire, "the Benedictine centuries."

ORDER

Order, the architects say, is heaven's first law. Through Benedict, it became the first law of monastic life as well. Monasteries need order more than natural communities. The reason for this is simple enough. The average man in the average community has his days and hours structured by a round of activities which are only tangentially of his own making. In some respects this is bad, but in others the very round of activities keeps him out of trouble because, according to the maxim of Ben Franklin, "idle hands are the devil's workshop."

Benedict discovered this early on in his monastic career. Benedict fled Rome because he feared the temptations there; when he finally got to his cave in Subiaco, he realized that the hermit's life had temptations of its own. In fact, because he was cut off from the round of activity that occupied the average man's time, he was subjected to temptations of a much more intense sort. Gregory, who was himself a monk before becoming pope, sets the psychological stage for his description of Benedict's temptation by stating unambiguously that the sexual temptations arrived "while the saint was alone." The tempter may have come "in the form of a little blackbird," but the temptations were of the usual sexual sort. "The evil spirit recalled to his mind a woman he had once seen," and before he knew it, "he was seized with an unusually violent temptation." Benedict's response to the temptation was to fling himself

> naked into the sharp thorns and stinging nettles. There he rolled and tossed until his whole body was in pain and covered with blood. Yet once he had conquered pleasure through suffering, his torn and bleeding skin served to drain out the poison of temptation from his body. Before long the pain that was burning his whole body had put out the fires of evil in his heart. It was by exchanging these two fires that he gained the victory over sin. So complete was his triumph that from then on, as he later told his disciples, he never experienced another temptation of this kind.

Gregory goes on to say that "now that he was free from these temptations he was ready to instruct others in the practice of virtue." But the lessons Benedict drew from dealing with sexual temptations were not literal. The Rule of St. Benedict does not recommend rolling in thorns as the antidote for sexual temptations, but it does recommend "strenuous work":

> God's chosen servants must therefore obey and serve and tire themselves out with strenuous work as long as they are still subject to temptations. Only when full maturity has left them undisturbed by evil thoughts are they put in charge of the sacred vessels, for then they become teachers of souls.

"Work and Pray, live on hay," were the lyrics to a Communist anti-religious song that mocked religion in general, but the motto of the Benedictines — *ora et labora* — in particular. Their mockery hides the truly revolutionary character of what Benedict discovered about the effect of corporeal activity on the emotions. It also reveals how profoundly incarnational Benedict's rational psychology was, especially if we compare him with Plotinus, the contemporary of St. Anthony, the father of Egyptian monasticism. Plotinus could opine: "When I come to myself, I wonder how it is that I have a body … by what deterioration did this happen?" Gnosticism is the perennial and perennially false default setting when it comes to man's understanding of the soul, and it could have turned the Christian monk into a western version of the Hindu fakir if Benedict had not taken control of the innate desire to purify the soul and channel that tendency in firmly social, communitarian, "Roman," and incarnational forms. Benedict's insistence on the salutary effects of manual labor put monastic life on a firmly incarnational foundation, one which proved to be a safeguard against the psychic excesses which can proliferate when a man absents himself from the ordinary round of human activities. "The fathers of old," according to Holzherr writing in *The Rule of Benedict: A Guide to Christian Living*,

> teach that no one is free from upsurges of aggressiveness, moods of depression, or sexual desires, nor may anyone arrive at true humility of heart, at instant unity with the brethren or strong and enduring unanimity or even hold out for any length in the monastery, unless he has first learnt to put aside his own will. Genuine conversion presupposes a real change of soul, which however does not at all mean a loss of one's individuality. To renounce self-will means freeing oneself from those inner, cumbersome resistances and selfishness which absorb much spiritual energy and provoke tensions with one's fellow men. The goal is not to renounce one's individuality, it is rather openness towards the others and a willing insertion into the community.

Benedict's genius lay in his practicality. His rule was not meant for Syrian ascetical superstars like St. Simon Stylites. Its genius lay in the fact that it proposed community as the more important and in many ways more difficult asceticism, and then by the fact that it proposed intensely practical ways of countering the perils of living disconnected from the social order which structures everyone's life, and in less decadent ages, keeps people out of trouble. The antidote to both lust and acedia is not so much heroic acts of mortification as much as prayer combined with physical activity. Even people who live an intellectual or spiritual life need physical activity to keep them from depression and acedia.

PRACTICALITY

The intensely incarnational nature of Benedict's can be seen in its practicality. Benedict makes sure that even the humblest details of daily life are not overlooked, including the number of dishes monks should provide at their meals and the amount of wine they can drink, and seasonal variations in the amount of psalms they could sing. The practicality of the rule extends to the circumstances in Italy at the time following the devastating effects of the war between the Goths and Justinian. Benedict says that "the monastery should be so arranged that all necessary things such as water-mill, gardens, and workshops should be within the enclosure." The self-contained enclosure was an antidote to chaos in a world in which Goths were not particularly good at laying siege to cities. In the era of chaos following the collapse of empire and the takeover of Europe by barbarian mobs, the monastery had to be an oasis of physical order before it could be an oasis of spiritual and moral order, and this is precisely what it became. The Benedictine Abbey was "a self-contained economic organism, like the villa of a Roman landowner, save that the monks were themselves the workers and the old classical contrast between servile work and free leisure no longer obtained." Dawson claims that "by its sanctification of work and poverty," the monastery

> revolutionized both the order of social values which had dominated the slave-owning society of the Empire and that which was expressed in the aristocratic warrior ethos of the barbarian conquerors, so that the peasant, who for so long had been the forgotten bearer of the whole social structure, found his way of life recognized and honored by the highest spiritual authority of the age. Even St. Gregory, who himself represented the traditions of the Senatorial aristocracy and the great Roman landowners, gives in his Dialogues a most sympathetic picture of the peasant life of contemporary Italian monasticism.

In each instance, the paradigm of Roman classical culture died and was reborn into something more universal, more suited to the entire population of Europe consistent with the radically egalitarian nature of the gospels and, therefore, something more permanent because more flexible. Just as the Roman genius for administration found itself reincarnated in Benedict's genius for regulating the course of daily life, so the Roman villa became transformed into the self-sufficient monastery as the vehicle for viniculture along the Danube and in even farther reaches to the north and west. It was the monks who brought agriculture, the most basic form of culture, back to the lands which had been depopulated by the barbarian invasions:

> Newman writes in a well-known passage on the Mission of St. Benedict: "St. Benedict found the world, physical and social, in ruins, and his mission was to restore it in the way not of science, but of nature, not as if setting about to do it, not professing to do it by any set time, or by any rare specific, or by any serious strokes, but so quietly, patiently, gradually, that often till the work was done, it was not known to be doing. It was a restoration rather than a visitation, correction or conversion. The new work which he helped to create was a growth rather than a structure. Silent men were observed about the country, or discovered in the forest, digging, clearing and building; and other silent men, not seen, were sitting in the cold cloister, tiring their eyes and keeping their attention on the stretch, while they painfully copied and recopied the manuscripts which they had saved. There was on one who contended or cried out, or drew attention to what was going on, but by degrees the woody swamp became a hermitage, a religious house, a farm, an abbey, a village, a seminary, a school of learning and a city."

Monte Cassino may have saved Europe from barbarism, but it couldn't save itself. It was destroyed by the Lombards in 577 and remained a desolate ruin until Abbot Petronax restored it in 717. Shortly before his death, Benedict prophesied to his disciple Theoprobus that "Almighty God has decreed that this entire monastery and everything I have provided for the community shall fall into the hands of the barbarians. It was only with the greatest difficulty that I could prevail upon Him to spare the lives of its members." The Lombards arrived in the middle of the night and plundered the entire monastery without capturing a single monk. But even this destruction followed the Christian paradigm of death as the prelude to resurrection. The monks were driven from Monte Cassino back to Rome, where once more at the heart of the Church which was once the heart of the empire, they began to exert influence over the rest of the Church in a way that would have been impossible if they had stayed where they were.

By the time the Lombards sacked Monte Cassino, the Ostrogothic kingdom had been defunct for 16 years. In 589, following the Third Council of Toledo, the Visigoths in Spain converted to Catholicism. One year after that conversion, in 590, Gregory the Great became pope. Four years after becoming pope, Gregory published his *Dialogues*, one of which was a biography of Benedict. At around the same time, Gregory heard a group of English schoolchildren singing in Rome. When he was told that they were "Angles" he misunderstood for a moment and thought he heard them described as "angels." Assuming that "Angles" might become "angels," Gregory sent Augustine of Canterbury to England to convert them to the Catholic faith. Augustine took with him Gregory's veneration of monasticism as the paradigm of Christian community and the vehicle for creating a transformed version of ethnic culture, fully rooted in local soil but just as fully connected to the universal Church.

The transplanting was so successful that within less than two hundred years Northumberland had become a center of monastic life and was now ready to send out missionary monks of its own to the still unconverted Frisian tribes on the opposite shore of the North Sea. In 716 a monk by the name of Winfried left England for Friesland; after he became bishop there, he changed his name to Boniface and became the instrument for the conversion of the Germanic tribes, who in turn welcomed Irish monks who founded monasteries in the area around Regensburg in the ninth century. Before being martyred in 754, Boniface turned the Frankish king Pepin southward in his orientation persuading him to accept his crown from the pope in Rome and ensuring that the ethnic absorption of Arian Christianity which proved fatal to the Goths would not happen to the Franks.

Two years before he died in 754, Boniface placed the crown upon Pepin's head, anointing him as king of the Franks, a ceremony that was repeated two years later by Pope Stephen II at St. Denis. In many ways, it was the crowning achievement of Boniface's mission, but the foundation of that mission was the monastic foundations he had created, especially the monastery which he founded at Fulda in 744. "It was in these Anglo-Saxon colonies," Dawson writes, "that the new type of Christian culture, which had been developed in

Northumbria in the seventh century, was adapted and transmitted to the Germanic peoples of the Continent, and new generation was trained which provided the personnel for the re-education and spiritual leadership of the Frankish Church."

The precedent which Boniface established with Pepin was continued by his heir Charlemagne, whose reign defined the terms of medieval culture for centuries to come. That that primitive culture transcended its still recent barbarian roots was in large measure due to Benedict's Rule of monastic life which turned Frankish eyes favorably toward Rome and the classical culture which Rome had absorbed and transfigured. Alcuin was to Charles the Great what Boethius was to Theodoric, but with happier results because in the meantime monasticism had provided an enculturation of Christianity and classical culture that was accessible to the ethnic ruler in a way that Arianism had not. That enculturation is evident in a letter from Alcuin to Charles the Great, in which the former suggests that Aachen may become the new Athens: "If your intentions are carried out," he writes, "it may be that a new Athens will arise in France, and an Athens fairer than of old, for our Athens, ennobled by the teaching of Christ will surpass the wisdom of Academy. The old Athens had only the teachings of Plato to instruct it, yet even so it flourished by the seven liberal arts. But our Athens will be enriched by the sevenfold gift of the Holy Spirit and will, therefore, surpass all the dignity of earthly wisdom."

"It may seem to us pathetic, or even absurd," Dawson writes, giving his gloss on the letter,

> that a monkish schoolmaster like Alcuin, and an illiterate barbarian like Charlemagne, should dream of building a new Athens in a world which possessed only the rudiments of civilization and was about to be overwhelmed by a fresh tide of barbarism. Nevertheless, their ideal of a Christian culture which would restore and preserve the inheritance of ancient civilization and classical literature was never lost and ultimately found its progressive realization in the development of Western culture. In this sense the achievement of the Carolingian age was a true renaissance and the starting point of Western culture as a conscious unity.

Benedict's monasticism was the cultural instrument which made the emergence of something truly unique onto the stage of history possible:

> The Carolingian legislation in itself marks the emergence of the new social consciousness of Western Christendom. Hitherto the legislation of the Western kingdom had been of the nature of a Christian appendix to the old barbarian tribal codes. Now, for the first time, a complete break was made with the past, and Christendom enacted its own laws, which covered the whole field of social activity in Church and state, and referred all things to the single standard of the Christian ethos. This was inspired neither by Germanic nor Roman precedent.

MY MONASTERY IS A MINIVAN

As some indication that the Benedictine idea refuses to die, a lady by the name of Denise Roy has written a book entitled *My Monastery is a Minivan*. Royonce aspired to become a contemplative nun but ended up in Berkeley's Jesuit School of Theology instead, where she aspired to become a woman priest. Ray eventually got married and divorced and remarried and picked up a master's degree in counseling psychology along the way. After having another child by her new husband, who happened to be academic dean of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, California, Roy settled into her role as housewife and mother, and soon noticed that in places like California, that meant spending large amount of time behind the wheel of an automobile. Rather than confront a culture which has turned the automobile and the suburbs it created into forms of social control by invoking the Benedictine idea of *stabilitas loci*, Roy turned the Benedictine idea on its head and tried to portray what is an instrument of control based on perpetual motion, with all the spiritual dangers that this gyrovagous invention brings with it, into "practical home-front spirituality." "My monastery," Roy tells us,

> is not a silent cell out in the wilderness. My monastery is a minivan. It is also a kitchen, a child's bedroom, an office. My monastery is in the heart of the world — in family life, with a child on my lap, in my partner's arms … A minivan might not be as good as a monastery for finding peace and quiet, but it is precisely where I find the face of God."

Roy's conversion of her minivan into a monastic cell is indicative of the abiding power that the Rule of St. Benedict continues to exert almost 1500 years since its conception. It is also one more example of a failure to carry that tradition coherently into the future. Rather than step back and evaluate the culture in terms of a religious paradigm of some venerability, Roy, who is a former U.S. delegate to the International Congress of Women and who conducts workshops on family, peacemaking, spirituality, and women's issues, bends the paradigm to conform to the culture, thereby destroying whatever power it still might possess. As if admitting the inadequacy of Roy's attempt to give new life to Benedict's Rule, the reviewer notes by way of explanation that "Roy does not try to do it all. Some days, it's miracle enough getting into the right minivan with the right husband behind the wheel." Benedict's Rule as a result gets absorbed by the very culture it might transform, as the minivan becomes an emblem of stability and its driver achieves peace, or claims to, through the constant motion which Benedict saw as spiritually corrupting.

Another instance that contemporary Catholic culture has lost its bearings, not just with regard to Benedict's Rule but with regard to the deeper notion of community is Dan Brophy's article, "The Parish of Choice," which appeared in *America,* a liberal Catholic magazine. Liberal, in this instance, means uncritical assimilation of the paradigms for community proposed by the dominant culture. That means an uncritical adoption of the tropes of consumer culture, which the author sees as promoting "freedom of choice." "Catholics today … want a meaningful spiritual home," Brophy tells us, "And they are willing to shop," he adds as if community were some sort of consumer item which one could pick off the shelves of the nearest WalMart. "The old practice of attending the neighborhood church," Brophy continues, "is no longer taken for granted among Catholics. We may, indeed, be approaching something closer to a'free market economy' in parish membership."

The serious point which Brophy's article misses is that the nation's bishops have effectively abolished the geographical parish, allowing Catholics to choose parishes according to lifestyle considerations. That, in turn, undermines the universality of the church by forcing parishes to engage in the religious equivalent of niche marketing, trying to appeal to groups which have identified themselves according to the marketing segment techniques of the dominant culture rather than their geographical local community. "Searching for a worshipping community is a hallmark of Catholic life these days," Brophy tells us with no sense of irony. Rather than identify the forces which are eroding community, Brophy praises the very consumerism that violates it in much the same way that Roy conflates the gyrovagous minivan with the Rule of St. Benedict, who felt that constant motion was the antithesis of the spiritual life. "Moving to a new place," Brophy continues, oblivious to the consumerist bias which distorts his notion of community, "we look for a parish where we feel comfortable, where people pray in a manner that 'fits' our prayer. … That may mean parents with young children, or singles or senior citizens, or business leaders or feminist-friendly, progressive or traditional, straight of gay — or the 'right' combination of all these groups."

Brophy argues that "The strength of Catholic life over the centuries has been grounded in communities that cut across social and economic boundaries: the rich kneel down and pray with the poor, the gay with the straight, [that dichotomy again] the liberal with the conservative — all of them together listen to the challenging word of God" — without understanding, how that example undermines not only the actual geographical parish community but his ideal of the "diverse" parish of choice as well. Given the way Brophy frames the issue, the parish of choice will be either an interest group, a consumer group, or a socio-economic class defined group, which in the last analysis means that it won't cut across social and economic boundaries. It will instead reinforce those boundaries dividing Catholics according to norms established by the dominant culture. Freedom of choice in this regard means that Catholics will meet with other Catholics only insofar as they identify themselves according to paradigms established by the dominant culture, *i.e.*, to give Brophy's example, only insofar as they are "gay" Catholics, or "feminist friendly" Catholics, or Catholics of the same education and income levels, like the Villanova grad who drives 30 minutes to Mass on Sunday to be with people like herself. That means that the parish of choice will be an instrument of covert colonization of the local community by the dominant culture because the only thing this community has in common is the paradigm from the dominant culture which organizes it.

As if his examples have sown doubts in his own mind, Brophy raises "the issue of church law." "Aren't Catholics," he wonders,

> supposed to attend the neighborhood church put in place purposely for them? Well, yes, but the law in question is not absolutely binding. Canon law states that each person "acquires his or her pastor and ordinary" according to place of domicile. In other words, your parish is where you live. But there is a long tradition — especially in 19th century America — of non-territorial parishes based on language and ethnic origin.

Brophy ignores the fact that ethnic parishes were, more often than not, located in ethnic neighborhoods, making his exception to the law a distinction without a difference. The ethnic group which attended an ethnic parish was a real community because of its ethnicity

but also because it, more often than not, lived in the same geographical area anyway, and because it was a group that transcended class and found its identity completely outside the categories established by the dominant culture. That, in fact, is why the dominant culture went out of its way to destroy these neighborhoods. The ethnic parish was not a parish of choice because ethnicity was not a consumer group. In fact, ethnicity is the opposite of consumer groups. Consumer groups, like Harley Davidson riders or people who go to Brittany Spears' concerts, are from the strategic point of view the antithesis of ethnic groups. In fact, they are like the suburbs, which are promoted as a replacement for the ethnic community because they are much more easily controlled. They are one weapon in the American empire's panoply of *receptio.* They provide a sense of identification that is less dangerous from the point of view of the culture of control through appetite than ethnicity.

Brophy concludes his article by stating that "It seems to be a buyer's market" without seeing that the consumerism he proposes as the paradigm of "choice" undermines the parish he proposes as community.

Community is a combination of form and content. The form is what it believes; the content is ethnicity. Ethnogenesis takes place when a group of people adopts a particular form of beliefs. When this perdures over generations, it is known as culture. For the Goths, ethnogenesis began when after adopting Arian Christianity, they came in increased contact with both the Roman empire and the Hunnic tribes that drove them into Roman territory. Community is an empty form without ethnicity, just as religion is an abstraction without a community of believers. In this regard the paradigm of Benedict confronting Totila is still instructive. In order to redeem ethnicity, the church must first take control ethnicity. In nineteenth century America, the barbarians whom the Church confronted were the newly arrived immigrants in general and the Irish in particular. The Irish, as Daniel Patrick Moynihan has noted, were known as the wild Irish when they arrived in New York, displaying many of the same characteristics in terms of family life and substance abuse that the black migrants from the south exhibited a century later. What civilized this group of people was the same thing that civilized the wandering barbarian hordes in Europe following the collapse of the Roman Empire, namely, the Church and the small communities it created. In the instance of 19th century America, small community meant not so much the Benedictine monastery, although they existed here too; it meant more than anything else the ethnic parish, which became the norm for Catholic life in the big cities where most Catholics lived because of the efforts of St. John Neumann of Philadelphia. In Philadelphia, the Irish gave up revolution and settled down to life in row houses located in ethnic parishes, and in exchange for that, the WASP ruling class gave them cultural autonomy in their neighborhoods and schools. That peace was broken unilaterally during World War II, when the WASP ruling class decided to become involved in social engineering to break up enclaves that had become too powerful politically.

SPECTACULAR SUCCESS

The Catholic Church's spectacular success taking control of ethnicity in the century of Catholic immigration beginning with the potato famine in Ireland and therevolution of 1848 in Germany and ending as the first American born generation came of age in the late '30s was followed by equally spectacular failure in the period following World War II. For some reason the Catholic bishops, largely Irish, concluded that Catholics were no longer living in a hostile environment. With exquisite irony, they arrived at this conclusion at the very moment when "the Catholic problem," as Paul Blanshard phrased it, had become an overriding preoccupation of the WASP ruling class. As a result the Church abandoned its efforts to take control of ethnicity at the very moment they should have intensified them.

According to the theory of the triple melting pot, religion replaces country of origin as the source of ethnicity in America in the third generation. The third generation of the huge cohort of Catholics which arrived in the period between 1890 and 1920 was just being born in the period around World War II. They came of age in a period when the bishops mistakenly felt that ethnicity, by which they meant country of origin, was disappearing. Instead of disappearing during the '50s and '60s, the third generation Catholics were finally emerging as a new American ethnic group during this period, the pan-ethnic Catholic. Instead of recognizing this fact, the Church confused the issue by getting involved in the race issue when the bishops issued their unfortunate pastoral letter on race in 1958 in response to events, not in northern cities, where race was being used to break up ethnic neighborhoods, but in response to events in the public schools in overwhelmingly Protestant Little Rock, Arkansas.

The American bishops' statement on race and discrimination was largely the work of Father John F. Cronin, a Sulpician priest who was also associate director of the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. Unlike Father John LaFarge, founder of the Catholic Interracial Council, Cronin considered the Little Rock incident a big deal, and he effectively conveyed his sense of urgency to the American bishops when he returned from Europe where he had been embarrassed by press reports of the governor of Arkansas blocking the doors of one that state's schools. After drafting a statement on his own for the bishops to sign, Cronin engaged in a "bitter struggle" to get their support.

Cardinal Mooney of Detroit and Cardinal McIntyre of Los Angeles opposed the Cronin statement as divisive, while Cardinal O'Boyle of Washington supported it. The bishops had reached an impasse when two things happened. In October Pope Pius XII ordered the bishops to issue a statement, largely at the urging of Father LaFarge. In 1956 LaFarge had urged Pius XII to remove "all uncertainty" as to where the church stood on segregation by issuing a statement supporting Archbishop Rummell of New Orleans, who had just excommunicated Catholics for supporting it. Pope Pius XII died the day after he sent the cable ordering the bishops to issue a statement. Because the message lacked the official papal seal, Apostolic Delegate Arnleto Cicognani ordered it suppressed, and the bishops might have remained at that impasse had not Cardinal O'Boyle persuaded the ever-influential Cardinal Spellman to back his proposal. With Spellman on board, the document was approved and issued by the bishops on November 8, 1958.

The bishops' statement was in large measure an exercise in irrelevance. After promising "to cut through the maze of secondary or less essential issues and to come to the heart of the problem," the bishops endorsed a number of propositions which were irrelevant to the real issue, which was being played out in the parishes of Chicago and Philadelphia and not in front of schools in Little Rock, Arkansas. "The heart of the race question," according to Discrimination and Christian Conscience, "is moral and religious." The bishops follow up this statement with the assertion that "All men … are brothered in Jesus Christ."

The statement is, of course, true, and it would only be disputed by a polygenist or a Darwinist of the sort one might find on the faculty of Harvard University or the planning commissions of big cities like Philadelphia and Chicago, but emphatically not in those cities' ethnic parishes, where the issue was not whether the Negro was a child of God, but rather whether he had the right to destroy Catholic communities of long standing by moving into Catholic parishes and displacing the local population. The issue according to the pastors on the South Side of Chicago was not whether the Negro was a child of God — no one would dispute that proposition — but the status of the parish community, something that got addressed obliquely and then dropped in the bishops' statement. "Our Christian faith," the faithful were told, "is of its nature universal. It knows not the distinctions of race, color, or nationhood." That statement is, as it stands, false. The Catholic Church, by its nature is universal. Race, in the American sense of the term as referring to skin color, had no meaning in Catholic parlance. However, "nationhood," if by that we mean *ethnos*, certainly did. The church's understanding of *ethnos* had always been cultural and never biological. That meant that seminarians studied in Rome while living at the various colleges — based on nationality and language — and never just as atomistic individuals. The existence of the North American College in Rome should have been some indication to Father Cronin that the Catholic Church did, in fact, "know … nationhood" and that it did not try to abolish it in order to preserve its charism of universality. By lumping "race, color and nationhood," *i.e.*, ethnicity, together, the document confuses what it should have distinguished.

MURKY STEW

To make matters worse, the document then throws the idea of "class distinction" into the same murky stew of ideas. "Among all races and national groups," the document continues, "class distinctions are inevitably made on the basis of like-mindedness of a community of interests. Such distinctions are normal and constitute a universal social phenomenon," but they are bad when "a factor such as race, by and of itself, should be made a cause of discrimination and a basis for unequal treatment in our mutual relations." First of all, class distinctions are different than ethnic identity, which is also different than the "like-mindedness of a community of interests" which binds together stamp collectors and NASCAR fans. The United States government was orchestrating racial conflict at the time in order to drive Catholics into choosing class distinction over ethnos as the basis of how they identified themselves. Secondly, the "local soil" pastors on the South Side of Chicago were never using "a factor such as race, by and of itself." By articulating the paradigm of the ethnic parish as the alternative to the Negro migration into and subsequent destruction of their communities, these pastors were framing the issue, even if in inchoate fashion, as an ethnic issue and not a racial issue, because the Catholic Church, especially in the United States, had traditionally framed the issue on these terms. Did the Germans have the right to take over an Italian parish? If not, why then did largely Protestant Negroes have the right to drive the Irish or the Poles out of their parishes? The Catholic Church had traditionally stated that each ethnic group had a right to organize its own parish. According to the traditional American Catholic understanding of ethnicity, that meant that Negroes from the South, if they were Catholic, had the right to found their own parishes, not that they had a right to take over the parishes of other groups. This was *a fortiori* true of Negroes who were not Catholic.

The bishops attempted to root their argument in the natural law, but even here the argument gets muddied by misapplying it to race, a category of American origin which has no referent in classical thought. "Reason alone," the bishops tell us,

> taught philosophers through the ages respect for the sacred dignity of each human being and the fundamental rights of man. Every man has an equal right to life, to justice before the law, to marry and rear a family under human conditions and to an equitable opportunity to use the goods of this earth for his needs and those of his family.

Since the bishops can't really move from those principles to the principle that people of a certain ethnic group have the right to live in certain neighborhoods, much less that they have the right to drive other ethnic groups out of those neighborhoods, the bishops' statement has to step outside the traditional parameters of natural law in the Catholic understanding of that term to "the principle — embodied in our Declaration of Independence — that all men are created equal in the sight of God." Having imported this Enlightenment principle by fiat, the bishops then go on to conclude that "discrimination based on the accidental fact of race or color, and as such injurious to human rights regardless of personal qualities or achievements, cannot be reconciled with the truth that God has created all men with equal rights and equal dignity."

Again, all of this may or may not be true, but all of it is irrelevant to the situation in Chicago, which revolved not around the rights of individuals before God but rather the rights of ethnic groups to maintain their local communities and parishes. "Today," the bishops continue,

> we are told that Negroes, Indians and some Spanish-speaking Americans differ too much in culture and achievements to be assimilated in our schools, factories, and neighborhoods. Some decades back the same charge was made against the immigrant Irish, Jewish, Italian, Polish, Hungarian, German, Russian.

The bishops' statement here ignores the fact that the Catholic Church made precisely "the same charge." By organizing its parishes according to ethnic group, the Catholic Church was only admitting the obvious, namely, that someone whose native tongue was, say, Hungarian or Polish, might have difficulty getting along in an English-speaking Protestant culture, and so, therefore, needed the support of people facing the same problems. The ethnic parish was an engine of assimilation when Hungarians arrived in Chicago, and it could have been an engine of assimilation as well for the blacks who arrived there from Mississippi if the Catholic Interracial Council hadn't consistently and deliberately misconstrued what had been Catholic praxis in this country from the time Catholics started living here in significant numbers. Since the ethnic parish was obviously a form of segregation, why hadn't the Catholic Church condemned it when it was used to segregate Poles and Italians? The answer to that question is that the Church didn't consider either segregation or the ethnic parish as wrong. Segregation was simply a way of reinforcing the strength of the ethnic community in a country that was hostile to its faith and contemptuous of its culture. And if it wasn't wrong for Poles to have their own segregated communities, why was it wrong for Negroes? Ultimately the Catholic Interracial Council could not go beyond the peculiar American understanding of race. As a result, the claims of one ethnic group were elevated above the claims of every other ethnic group in a philosophical muddle of ideas that bespoke less a desire to know the truth and act in justice than a desire to absorb the contradictory categories which the dominant culture imposed on Catholics as the price of assimilation.

Even if he wasn't instrumental in getting it passed, the bishops' statement on discrimination was Father LaFarge's crowning achievement. Congratulations poured in to Father LaFarge from eight United States Senators as well as from black leaders like Roy Wilkins and A. Philip Randolph as if he had written it himself. LaFarge's triumph, however, could not disguise the fact that at this point of his life, five years from his death, he was losing control of his own organization. If the New York Catholic Interracial Council had the position of *primus inter pares* because of its association with Father LaFarge, that position was being constantly challenged by the Chicago CIC, which had the reputation of being closer to the cutting edge of racial struggle. "Several of the young Turks of the movement," according to David W. Southern, "such as Father Cantwell, Matthew Ahmann, Lloyd Davis, and Robert Sargent Shriver, all Chicagoans, believed that events had overwhelmed the aging LaFarge and Hunton. The Midwesterners also believed that their council was superior to New York's."

Probably the one issue which most convinced the Chicagoans that LaFarge was out of step with the times was his dogged opposition to birth control. LaFarge was opposed to birth control because he was a Catholic priest and understood it as being morally wrong, but he was against birth control for Negroes because he was aware of the hold racial eugenics had on the American mind. When LaFarge heard a rumor (which turned out to be false), that the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses planned to open birth control

clinics, he addressed a letter to the secretary, instructing her to sever at once his connection with the association and "to make known this disassociation in any way possible." In addition, he berated the organization for taking a step that was sure to be "fatal to the Association's purposes," and in a final salvo he declared that birth control was "aimed directly at the freedom, progress and prosperity of the Negro race."

These sentiments were bound to erode LaFarge's support among his liberal fellow travelers on the racial issue. By the time he had reached the end of his life, LaFarge's position on racial equality was not enough to ensure his *bona fides* as part of the liberal consensus on race. That consensus had been expanded to include support of birth control, something which LaFarge could not approve because he was old enough to remember the pre-World War II eugenic campaigns of Margaret Sanger and the Birth Control League, something the other liberals had forgotten or repressed. Harvard's Gordon Allport criticized LaFarge "for denigrating all secular liberals as purveyors of 'ethical anarchy'" because they favored birth control and divorce.

The Catholic Church in 1958 mistakenly identified what was in reality an ethnic protest over social engineering as a "racial" issue, thereby failing to maintain the hold on ethnogenesis which it had managed so brilliantly during the time of the great immigration in the mid-to late 19th century. Instead of taking charge of the ethnogenesis that was then occurring as the third generation of European immigrants came of age and telling the "ethnics" that their real identity lay not in the fact that they were "white," but rather in the fact that their true ethnicity was now American Catholic, the Catholic bishops, following the lead of Father LaFarge's Catholic Interracial Council, identified itself with the categories of the pan-Protestant WASP/Negro alliance which eventually came to be known as the Civil Rights Movement, the same group which was orchestrating the social engineering which was causing the unrest among the ethnics in the first place.

That decision to choose race over ethnicity as the explanation of what was going on also cut the ground from underneath the Black Catholics. By accepting the racial categories proposed by the ruling class to define the issue, the Catholic Church condemned Black Catholics to a twilight anomalous existence in the Church, according to which they had to choose between being "Black," which is to say ethnically southern and Protestant, or "Catholic," which meant "white" and European. Because they addressed the issue in racial and not ethnic terms, the bishops alienated the "white" Catholic ethnics, who felt that the Church had been taken over by liberal do-gooders who were insensitive to their plight, and they bequeathed to the Black Catholics an ongoing identity crisis and sense of divided loyalty. By addressing the issue on racial instead of ethnic terms, the bishops pushed Black Catholics into the arms of the Protestant civil rights movement in opposition to their fellow Catholics. They also spread the sense, as John Cardinal Krol put it, that this group was "more Black than Catholic." The net result of the bishops' adoption of the racial categories of the dominant culture is that the Catholic Church lost its hold on ethnogenesis.

Ten years later, the Republican Party capitalized on the Catholic failure and turned "white" ethnics, who were ethnically really Catholics, into conservatives. In his introduction to his book *The Emerging Republican Majority*, Kevin Phillips says he's just describing the political facts of life, but in calling Richard M. Nixon and John N. Mitchell "its two principle architects" in the book's dedication, he gives some indication that the wheels of history turn quicker if people get out and push. The Republican Party under Richard Nixon, in other words, took ethnogenesis out of the hands of the Catholic Church and taught a whole generation which was emerging into its true identity as Catholic ethnics (from its previous identity as ethnic Catholics) to think of themselves as "conservatives" instead. In doing this, Nixon did for the Republican Party what Franklin Delano Roosevelt had done for the Democrats 36 years earlier. He had created the foundation for a political epoch by giving this group of people the identity which the Catholic Church had denied them. He also created the ethnic revival of the '70s and *All in the Family* as Hollywood's counterattack against it, as Rob Reiner admitted after the death of Carroll O'Connor. "The new ethnic politics," Michael Novak wrote in *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics,* "is a direct challenge to the WASP conception of America." If so, the challenge turned out to be a lot like the Susquehanna River. It was a mile wide and 18 inches deep. Michael Novak's book, in fact, was as deep as it got. Novak at least had some appreciation of the strategic significance behind the programs the WASP ruling class promoted in the name of what people like Ed Bacon would term disinterested benevolence. "Educated partisans of a rational, modern, mobile culture support 'change,'" according to Novak, "because change is in their own self-interest. The breakdown of families and neighborhoods clears the way for sweeping programs, of the mobile way of life of experts and for the dreams of utopians."

Novak rightly attributed the ethnic revival of the early '70s to "disillusionment with the universalist too thickly rational culture of profession elites" which he identified as quintessentially WASP and typical of "upper class Quakers," who "think and feel in a way that I cannot think and feel." When Quakers or Yankees talk about "humanism" or "progress," it invariably means "moral pressure" exerted on ethnics "to abandon their own traditions, their faith, their associations, in order to reap higher rewards in the culture of the national corporations." But when they do, they often times discover that they have become the victims of an undeclared form of covert warfare being waged against them. In other words, Catholic ethnics by adopting the values of the ruling class collaborated in their own destruction. In this regard Novak cites the case of "a young Italian lawyer" who returned from Mississippi where he had been working for the civil rights movement only to find that the planning commission of "his home city was running an expressway through the traditional homes of his family."

According to Novak, the assimilation the Italian lawyer was expected to undergo really entailed the adoption of a "new religion," one which exalted as its *summum bonum* "power over others, enlightenment, an atomic (rather than a communitarian) sensibility, a contempt for mystery, ritual, transcendence, soul, absurdity, and tragedy." In dealing with their Catholic ethnic employees, the WASP ruling class "perfected a system for mastering them," which entailed learning to "balance nationalities" against each other, a system which reached perfection in places like Detroit, where as Novak noted, two out of every three people are either Polish or black.

Novak, in effect, puts his finger on the strategy which the Romans called *receptio* and which would later come to be known as multiculturalism, namely, "by judiciously mixing many nationalities, the employer [or emperor] could keep them divided and incapable of concerted actions on their own behalf." By determining what were going to be the default settings of the culture, the WASP elite could determine strategic outcomes in a way that the dominated ethnic groups could not. "American democracy," according to Novak's theory "operates as a shield for WASP hegemony and to reinforce a WASP sense of reality, stories and symbols." That meant the creation of a "rationalized social order," which could only function efficiently if "local pockets of tradition, 'prejudice' and ignorance are made to give way to atomistic conceptions of self, sociality and happiness." The point of Americanization was not

just assimilation; it was domination and control based on the systematic destruction of anything that allowed the ethnic to function as something other than a naked atomistic individual:

> If one deprives people of their affective bonds to family, culture and value, then one can reconstruct them afresh. While they are confused and without identity, one can manipulate them more freely, telling them what they ought to be. One takes their souls and gives them bread and circuses. For a while — until they awaken — they are grateful.

The ethnic revival of the '70s was supposed to be that awakening. At least that is the impression one gets from reading Novak's book. If so, it was followed by an even more profound slumber than the one which preceded it, as theethnics succumbed to ever more intrusive and pernicious forms of social engineering. "The crises in our cities," Novak concluded correctly, "are a direct effect of government policies."

If so, the leaders of the ethnic revival were having a hard time translating theory into practice. One indication of the superficiality of the ethnic revival in Philadelphia during the early '70s is the fact that Mayor Frank Rizzo didn't support State Representative Martin Mullen in his gubernatorial campaign, nor did Jim Tate, who in fact supported Milton Shapp in the primary election in spite of the fact that Shapp was the architect of the *Schempp v. Abington* school prayer decision as the former head of the local branch of the American Jewish Committee and a supporter of abortion. Mullen felt betrayed by Tate's action and denounced "people like Tate who call themselves Christians and yet supported Shapp." Part of the problem was the inter-ethnic rivalry which Novak touched on in his book. The triple melting pot was, in many ways, not finished with its work in Philadelphia. Frank Rizzo was an Italian, and Jim Tate was an Irishman, and both of them may have been Democrats, but they did not identify themselves as Catholics in either the ethnic or political sense of the word, even though their enemies did.

They also did not think strategically, as their enemies did. Philadelphia WASPs like Senator Joseph Sill Clark supported abortion, contraception, and sexual liberation in general because he knew that his ethnic group would never have big families. Therefore, anything that hindered other people from having big families was to his and his ethnic group's advantage. Similarly, anything that promoted racial succession and crime and turnover in ethnic neighborhoods was to his advantage as well. All that people like Joe Clark had to do was promote forces that increased social disorder and then let nature, or fallen nature, take its course.

Ethnics like Rizzo and Tate were also handicapped by their limited understanding of the situation. Priding themselves on the fact that they were practical men who knew how to get things done, they missed the strategic implications of the war that was being waged against them. Abortion for them was a moral issue or it was a religious issue, but seeing it that way blinded them to the fact that it was also a political issue that threatened their political power in a subtle but direct fashion.

As a result they did not come to Mullen's aid, and as a result Mullen lost the primary in May of 1974. After losing to Shapp in the primary in May, Mullen delayed until August before he endorsed him for the November elections. On September 10, Mullen held a press conference in which he said that Governor Shapp had "done an excellent job" as governor "outside of morality issues." Mullen felt that out of party loyalty, he had to support "all the candidates on the Democratic ticket."

In gratitude for his support, Shapp's henchman Herb Fineman stripped Mullen of his chairmanship of the House Appropriations Committee on December 27, 1974. "Mr. Mullen's dismissal is hardly lamentable," one of the Philadelphia papers sniffed, "however, the process by which he was removed should be cause for concern." In spite of his failed run for the governor's office, Mullen was re-elected to his district by an over 2 to 1 margin. His Republican opponent could marshal only 4,330 votes to Mullen's 9,349. That meant that Mullen, in other words, was not vulnerable to Republican opposition, but he was vulnerable to opposition from within the Democratic Party, especially if that vote could be mobilized along racial lines.

Four years after Mullen lost his bid to become governor, the *Inquirer* was still hounding him, this time by sending reporter Maralyn Lois Polak to interview him. Polak began by criticizing Mullen for wearing plaid pants and a striped shirt. The interview went downhill from there. At one point, Polak leeringly asked Mullen if he liked sex, to which he disarmingly responded, "Well, sure, I'm married." Mullen then turned the tables on the interviewer by bringing up the fact that he was being criticized for his religion by papers like the *Inquirer* who had turned his political demise into a journalistic crusade. "All you have to do is read that paper of yours," Mullen told Polak, "and see how they belittle people." By 1978, Mullen was still in office but his constituency was being eroded by racial migration. Polak's article was timed to make him look bad in the November '78elections. When the racial make-up in his district finally tipped, the Democrats ran a straight up racial campaign against him and he was out of a job.

After being proposed unsuccessfully by Barry Goldwater in 1964 and then re-proposed successfully by Richard Nixon in 1968and 1972, conservatism finally came into its own in 1979 with the election of Margaret Thatcher in England and in 1980with the election of Ronald Reagan in America. The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan made conservatism especially appealing to the anti-Communist feelings of Irish and other American Catholics. By the end of the '70s, Michael Novak, proponent of the unmeltability of ethnics at its beginning, melted down into a conservative less than a decade after his book, proving, if anyone had any doubts, that conservatism was a form of de-ethnicization. Kevin Phillips, the man who wrote the book about the Republicans' ethnic strategy, claimed in the same book that American political history operates on 36-year cycles. If so, the conservative cycle should have been over by 2004. George W., like his Daddy, would have been a one-term president. Preceding each cycle, according to Phillips, is a precursor of the cycle to come. That meant that the Al Smith campaign in 1928 presaged the New Deal coalition, just as Barry Goldwater's campaign in 1964 presaged the conservative revival. According to Phillips system, that means that the conservative cycle which began with Richard Nixon in 1968 should have ended with George W. Bush in 2004. Perhaps the exigencies of the two wars Bush launched extended the cycle to 2008. A new political cycle would be based on the unsuccessful campaigns of either Pat Buchanan or Ralph Nader or Ron Paul or a combination of them, anti-globalism being the common denominator.

Whatever the crucial political issue, the disintegration of conservatism is going to mean the re-emergence of ethnicity. Ideology, like the culture of empire, is like water which fills in valleys between mountains and simultaneously turns them into islands and makes communication between them possible. When the shared ideology of a movement like conservatism or liberalism or socialism or communism drains away, all that is left are the isolated peaks of ethnicity and religion. This draining away is accentuated by the fact that the big cycle of political history, beginning with the Enlightenment, is losing its force as well. The Enlightenment paradigm of "citizen" was a deliberate harkening back to the Roman imperial ideal of *civis romanus*. That secular idea was replaced by the destruction of the political state which the empire embodied and its replacement by the ethnic religious community. The Byzantine emperor Justinian accelerated the process by closing down the Academy of Athens in 529. What the Christians began, the Muslims brought to completion. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Roman Empire, a man, according to Brown, "was defined by his religion alone. He did not owe allegiance to a state; he belonged to a religious community." Benedict's Rule provided, in effect, a way in which that state of affairs could be ratified by being lived out in a specific community in the parts of Europe that were once under the sway of the empire in the west. The Arabs accomplished the same thing in the eastern part of the empire because, again in Brown's words,

> in the Arab empire nobody was a "citizen" in the classical sense. This was the final victory of the idea of the religious community over the classical idea of the state. The Muslims were slaves of Allah, and the others were *dhimmis* — protected groups, defined entirely in terms of three religious allegiances: Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians.

The Utopian Left has always dreamed that ethnic groups would disappear to be replaced by a universal class of people who all shared the same values. Why, Karl Marx wondered, should one be content to be a Pole when instead he could be a worker? The Neoconservatives, many of whom, like Irving Kristol and David Horowitz, were once Trotskyite believers in world revolution, now express the faith that globalism, free trade, American junk culture and American military might, will achieve the same messianic ends. Ethnicity will now be absorbed into a global culture based on free trade which will make the conflicts of the past unnecessary. That means the end of history, if by history we mean conflict, largely ethnic conflict.

In the wake of the fall of communism, however, things have turned out differently than the ex-Trotskyite, neocon globalists have expected. Instead of fewer wars, we now have neocon apologists like Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz calling for total war and permanent war. In much the same way, American led globalism is leading to an increase in ethnicity and not its diminution. The empire — whether Roman or American — which sets out to destroy ethnicity paradoxically creates it in the very process of trying to

destroy it. No matter what apologists for American global hegemony say, secular global culture creates the need for its opposite, and its opposite, then as now, is the small, religious-based community. The American Empire is now creating a need for community among Muslim Gastarbeiter in Belgium every bit as unerringly, if unintentionally, as the Roman Empire, also preoccupied with war, created the need for small Christian communities in late antiquity. It does so because secular culture is increasingly vapid, but also because globalism brings different groups in contact with each other, and increased contact means increased ethnic identification, not its opposite.

Roosens has noticed this among the Huron in Quebec, the Luba and the Luluwa in the Congo, and among the Flemish in Belgium. Proximity to other groups, the whole point to what Louis Wirth called "integration" and what was later called multiculturalism, creates not uniformity but rather the need to differentiate. Contact with other groups means ethnogenesis. The evidence of the period following the '60s is that "ethnic groups are affirming themselves more and more." Friedrich Barth, according to Roosens,

> points out that the intensity with which a group profiles itself as an ethnic group, and with which individual stress their ethnicity, generally increases when there is intense spatial-geographical and social contact between groups. The most isolated "traditional" group of people is probably the least ethnically self-defined. There is more chance that the Flemish in Brussels, who always have to speak French, will become more "consciously" Flemish than their ethnic brothers and sisters in the rather isolated rural areas of West Flanders or Limburg.

GLOBALISM WILL CREATE ETHNICITY

This means that globalism will create ethnicity, and by undermining the power of the nation state globalism will return the world to a time similar to the seventh century, when the idea of a "citizen" disappeared from the world's vocabulary, to be replaced by members in small, religious-based communities. The secular neocon Trotskyite internationalists who are the driving force behind American foreign policy now are unwittingly bringing about the rise of the very thing they want to extinguish, namely, increased religious and ethnic allegiance across the globe. This becomes most apparent if one looks at the rise of Islam, where religion plays a crucial role in ethnogenesis, especially among Gastarbeiter in Europe, per Roosens:

> Religious membership subsumes ethnic belonging in such a way that the stigma of belonging to a Turkish or a Moroccan subclass vanishes and is replaced by a more prestigious emblem. Although not very much cherished by European natives, Islam is still a world power, where the Turkish or Moroccan proletariat is not. Thus, emphasizing Islamic membership becomes a means of social promotion for immigrant workers and their families. Islam is not only officially recognized and subsidized by the Belgian state, and as such, is a protected organization, it is also funded by the wealthier oil countries. According to well-informed insiders, Brussels, as a central location in Europe and as the potential capital of the continent after the 1992 consolidation of the EEC countries, may be one of the favored spots where Islamic power will try to establish itself in Europe. It is noteworthy that Islam has made a creation number of converts among the Belgian population, and that Flemish Muslims are henceforth a reality.

Terrorism, as I have said before, is simply the return of the repressed. It is an extreme expression of ethnic solidarity, compounded by the fact that globalism erodes moral restraint. On a less extreme level, globalism means the return of ethnic identification with religion and not the state, just as it did following the collapse of the Roman Empire. As conservatism approaches the end of its political cycle, the only question remaining is who will step in and fill the crucial cultural vacuum that empire and its preoccupation with war is creating. Hitler offers one paradigm of a politician who played the ethnic card; Richard Nixon did something similar with the ethnic revival of the '70s. The really important mobilizations of ethnicity are, however, religious, not political. Islam has much to offer its adherents in this regard. Whether the Catholic Church responds in kind depends to a large extent on whether it can shake off its fatal attraction to ideologies and policies which weaken it. Unlike Islam which spreads by military conquest and tends of its nature to fundamentalism, Christianity spreads by conversion and assimilation, which means, of course, that someone is invariably going to take it down a blind alley.

BLIND ALLEY

The Catholic Church in America has followed the blind alley of assimilation to its bitter end. It allowed its institutions to adopt the sexual mores of the dominant culture and now that same dominant culture is prepared to destroy the church by lawsuit for doing what it was told. Now, if it wants to survive, it will have to give up its illusions about assimilation and get down to the difficult work of taking control of ethnicity once again and building real small communities once again. The signs of the times indicate that the moment is right. Abbot Lambert Grenan of St. Meinrad's Abbey in southern Indiana says that the monastery is overwhelmed with refugees from the culture of appetite, which is precisely the state of affairs which got Benedict started in his time. The Church has little choice in the matter. Either it takes control of ethnogenesis as it did in the time of Benedict, Gregory, Alcuin, Charlemagne, and, more recently, St. John Neumann and the ethnic parish, or ethnogenesis will fall into the hands of political operatives like Richard Nixon or Adolf Hitler. If Christianity doesn't fill the cultural gap that empire is creating, then Islam will. There are no other options now.

No matter how misguided their ideas are, people like Roy and Brophy are correct in seeing that Catholics are starved for community in an empire which has grown too large and a church which has made imprudent accommodations with that empire. The recent collapse of the traditionalist Community of St. John outside Scranton, Pennsylvania bespeaks the same hunger. Its failure indicates that no one has come up with the formula to channel that hunger into something as lasting as what Benedict created at the fall of the Roman Empire.

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Abu Ghraib and The American Empire

Jewish Nazis

L'affaire Williamson: The Catholic Church and Holocaust Denial

Lejzor and Fiszel Sing the Blues: Chess Records and the Black-Jewish Alliance

The Logos of Architecture and Its Opponents

Niggas in Denial: Pimping the System and The System of Pimping

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